

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 248.

My name is Mary Gallagher, and I am a stay-at-home mom and the reason I support House Bill 248 is to end discrimination based on personal medical information that should remain private (i.e., vaccine status of an individual).

First, thank you for all the work that you are doing for Ohioans to secure our basic rights today and into the future.

I want to share with you an example of discrimination I experienced during an appointment last Monday, May 17th.

I was on a video call with a medical health professional discussing a situation in which this provider suggested an assessment for my child that the provider could give. I was told that the assessment could be given in the provider's home office, which I was fine with, presuming I would be present since my child is a minor. I was so excited to finally get a clear path toward an answer to something that has been concerning me. Unfortunately, my excitement was soon squashed.

I was then asked if I had been vaccinated, which I thought was inappropriate to be asked. At this point, I had not been vaccinated, but the provider assured me that both the provider and their spouse had been vaccinated.

Now, neither my child nor I were exhibiting signs of the virus, nor had we been in contact with anyone in the previous 14 days that had been diagnosed with Covid-19. I was, however, told that they are ONLY seeing people in-person who have been vaccinated. I offered to socially distance myself and wear a mask, as we have been doing for the past year, yet this provider did not budge on their stance.

This is blatant DISCRIMINATION and I beg you to act NOW to please put an END to it.

Additionally, I was disturbed because I thought that my medical choices would be protected under HIPAA so that such discrimination would not occur.

If the vaccination works, then why would a professional prohibit anyone who is not vaccinated from being seen? If we have not been exposed to anyone with the virus, why on Earth would someone discriminate against seeing us, especially if we were willing to follow protocol which has worked for a whole year? In fact, if the vaccine works, is social distancing or a mask even needed? My thought is that their decision is based in fear. Why does the fear of Covid-19 trump another person's apprehension or possible fear of the Covid-19 vaccine and its unknown repercussions? This is biased. We as Americans have a right to use our own brains to choose the best course of action for ourselves and our families and in the time that is most appropriate for us and our families.

Life involves risk. Prior to Covid-19, every day we woke up and went about our lives. We took risks and we will continue to do so all our lives. The reality is that we all have one thing in common and that is that at some point, we will all die. How and when we die will be different and we truly cannot control it, though we can take precautions.

Someone who is concerned with catching a virus due to age or other conditions might take precautions, such as an experimental vaccine. Someone who has a healthy immune system might take precautions by avoiding an experimental vaccine or waiting for the trial to end before making their final decision on choosing to be vaccinated. Some with a compromised immune system might choose to get the experimental vaccine while others in the same situation might decide that avoiding an experimental vaccine is best for them and may be what their doctor recommends.

The truth is that as Ohioans and Americans, we **MUST** allow each other to choose **FREELY** what goes into our bodies and treat each other and our choices with **RESPECT**. Each person has dignity and value no matter what they choose in regard to a vaccine and each person should be treated with respect regardless of that choice.

As you can see, there is not a question as to whether or not people who have not been vaccinated will be discriminated against. The discrimination is going on already and we must act now to put an end to it.

So, for this reason, and many others, I highly implore you to **VOTE FOR HB248**.

May God bless you and your work and may you stay strong in your defense of our freedoms as Ohioans and Americans.

Thank you once again for all that you do for all Ohioans and for this opportunity to provide testimony on the need for and urgency of House Bill 248.

Sincerely,
Mary Gallagher