

Taylor Golden
House Bill 248 Proponent Testimony
House Health Committee
May 23, 2021

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Honorable Members of the House Health Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today. My name is Taylor Golden, and I am writing to ask for your support of HB 248 regarding vaccine choice and vaccine discrimination. I am an educated young professional, active community member, and taxpayer. As Ohioans like myself are suffering from COVID-19 restrictions, mental health disorders and financial burdens, I have also been grieving the loss of my sister, Haleigh. Less than three years ago, Haleigh was a blossoming, 20 year old college student when a reaction to the meningitis vaccine took her life. While attempting to heal and go through the “normal stages” of grief, my sister’s death forced my family to uncomfortably confront the fact that “safe and effective” is a lie. Following the loss of my sister, I have continued to lose family members and friends who simply reject the reality of what contributed to Haleigh’s death, and the amount of loss just feels endless. The bereavement process became that much more difficult when Ohio's COVID response began with an announcement of an emergency and a slow progression of restrictions. There was no clear timeline or criteria for ending, and no plan for how individuals, businesses, or the entire state would recover. The ramifications from orders and mandates placed on the state have been nothing short of devastating for me and my family as we deal with the fear, nasty looks, and confrontational remarks from others who are offended by our maskless faces. For over a year, I’ve been forced to make the decision of staying secluded in my home to avoid harassment, or try to live on with some semblance of a real life, all while still grieving, and trying to make sense of the world crumbling around me. But I have come to realize that the worst part of living in today’s COVID world, which I can only describe as a slap in the face, is that an emergency has been declared to perpetuate dependency on a vaccine as the only protection for one’s own health. There are never-ending reminders on TV, on social media, in the workplace, or in the supermarket to roll up my sleeve and do my part. But none of these targeted ads consider my family history, my medical status, or my own personal circumstances. I fear that without the protections outlined in HB248, the “Masks Required” signs on every public entrance will be replaced with “Proof of Vaccination Required”. So I implore you to vote in favor of this bill to prohibit the implementation and tracking of vaccination status, and uphold my right to medical privacy and informed consent. It is imperative that both adults and children are protected without fearing discrimination, termination, or expulsion. The provisions in this bill ensure that Ohioans like myself will not be coerced, and they provide legal assistance if my rights are violated. Most people can agree that when one person's rights are violated, all of our rights are violated, so I strongly urge our representatives to vote yes on this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

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