

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 Cara Hathaway and I am a wife, mother of two and a speech-language pathologist. I support House Bill 248 because I believe vaccination should be a choice for those who wish to be vaccinated, just as much as for those who do not wish to be vaccinated. I believe that our constitution and bodily autonomy is a right and a freedom that every individual deserves. People should be given the option to accept or decline something that might not align with their religious, personal, or health beliefs.

In 2018, I was told I had to get the flu shot for work. I was vaguely familiar with medical and religious exemptions, but not enough to know my rights or how to go about accessing these exemptions. In addition to this lack of information, if vaccinated, I would receive a yellow sticker on my badge for all to see; however, if an exemption were approved I would've been required to wear a mask from October through April, the duration of flu season. I ended up getting the flu vaccine, unknowingly pregnant at the time. Unfortunately, I miscarried shortly after receiving that vaccine. This is one of the pivotal moments that opened my eyes to the carelessness surrounding workplace vaccinations and adverse reactions. I later learned that if pregnant, there is a registry I should have been entered into and monitored for reactions. Who was responsible for filing this report, the hospital nurse? My physician? These are questions that were never answered. Had I chosen not to receive the flu vaccine, I would've been discriminated against by wearing a face mask when around patients, for making an educated and informed medical decision.

OSHA recently reported that employers who required the COVID-19 vaccination could be held liable for injury through workmans compensation. However, only a day later they relinquished the liability of the employers. Who would be responsible for a COVID-19 workplace mandated injury or death? Not the pharmaceutical companies. Not my employer. Me!

Coercion is not the same as consent. Had I been given true informed consent about the flu vaccine and understood my medical and religious rights of refusal, my life could look very different today. The same is true for all of those who have been coerced into getting the COVID-19 vaccine for their job.

If the COVID-19 injection becomes a condition of employment in schools, nursing homes, hospitals, private practice, outpatient clinics, home health, etc. I will be unable to work as I would not be able to receive this injection per my medical history and history of vaccine injury. As a penalty of not getting the vaccine, discrimination could result in not being hired, wearing a mask, social distancing, and other restrictions further isolating me from peers

Requiring proof of vaccination would take away individual freedoms, harm patient privacy, and would result in a two-class system based on those who are vaccinated and unvaccinated. We must protect these fundamental rights. The decision to decline a vaccination must remain a private, individual choice. We are free citizens of this country and state, we must maintain the ability to retain employment, attend church and schools freely, and shop freely, without discrimination.

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

Sincerely, Cara Hathaway