

May 23, 2021

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

I am a housewife and homeschooling mother of an awesome 9-year-old boy, and I am worried for his future in the State of Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on House Bill 248, the Vaccine Choice and Anti-Discrimination Act. This truly is a freedom bill because without this type of legislative protection, all Ohioans will be facing outright discrimination in the ugliest of ways. House Bill 248 must remain a bill that is broad in scope and not specific to one issue (i.e. This cannot be just about COVID-19). Over the past 14 months Ohioans have learned that the goalposts are forever moving and that government will “never let a good crisis go to waste.” If this insanity is truly to end in the State of Ohio, it must end once and for all with swift, comprehensive, broad legislative action so that state-sponsored discrimination is NEVER allowed again.

My husband and I are active amateur musicians in both Cuyahoga and Summit Counties, and we both have been impacted by the actions of the Ohio Executive Branch since March of 2020. My husband plays lead trumpet in a volunteer, community jazz band. He has held this seat for over 15 years and is a very fine player. The jazz band last rehearsed together in February of 2020. The self-appointed band leader of this group sent the following message to my husband just a few weeks ago – “I believe that restricting our rehearsals to those who have been vaccinated is the prudent policy.” This same self-appointed band leader told my husband that “I don’t believe vaccine status is a protected class” when it comes to the point my husband made about violating civil rights when he was specifically asked about his vaccine status. My husband refuses to share his vaccination information with anyone – including this self-appointed band leader. Because of my husband’s refusal to share his private and personal medical information, he has been told that he will be missed from the jazz band. My husband is no longer welcome to rehearse and perform with this group because one self-appointed band leader has taken it upon himself to do what he “feels is best for all of the members.” Sadly, the majority of members of the jazz band feel the same way.

I play clarinet in a local volunteer community orchestra, and the present Board of Directors is indicating that they are contemplating questioning audience members on their vaccine status prior to entry into a paid concert. There is also the possibility of questioning the vaccine status of orchestra members as well in the near future. Where does this judgmental power come from? My medical information is mine; I have the choice to share or not share.

I understand that these are just community-based, volunteer, amateur musical groups, but the shocking discrimination being displayed and discussed by these groups is simply appalling. For over 400 days, the Ohio Executive Branch has empowered Ohioans to be judge and jury over others. This Ohio Executive Branch is supporting and encouraging both public and private entities to discriminate against employees, customers, and patients. Sadly, I am witness to discrimination through volunteer community-based musical groups. This simply is unequivocally wrong. We must live in a state in which blatant medical discrimination is not tolerated.

Your support of House Bill 248 is urgently needed not only to rectify this point in history, but to save future generations from state-sponsored judgmental discrimination. Swift action on this bill is required as our current Ohio Executive Branch continues to preach bullying propaganda, thus empowering many throughout the public and private sectors to bully fellow Ohioans.

Thank you again for your support of House Bill 248.

Respectfully yours,
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