

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 Penny Miller and I am a mom and live within a large Amish community which is part of an estimated population of 80,000 Amish Ohioans. Many are MY neighbors and have all the same daily requirements that you and I have. We need medical care on occasion, we need groceries, and we do not grind our own flour, make our own sugar, or produce a lot of other things necessary for living life. Over the last year, we've seen how terrible treatment of others can be who accidentally let their masks slip down below their nose. Imagine if the unvaccinated were made to wear masks while the vaxxed were permitted to go about their lives and in time, eventually people began to see the masked as disease carriers, (in which the irony is that is that those with natural immunity have historically been the ones providing the most strength/durability to herd immunity.) Imagine the discrimination that would arise because of our great state allowing (or even promoting) the degradation of a people group (like the Amish) by forcing them buy groceries or do business elsewhere because they will not bend to any sort of vaccine or an accompanying passport.

Amish are already limited largely to shopping only as far as their horse and buggy can safely or reasonably travel. Amish in my area and I imagine in other areas, shop at Walmart. I recently took my neighbor to have her glasses repaired at Walmart. I wore a mask more to avoid drawing attention to her (more than any other reason) and she was treated poorly by one of the workers that loudly and rudely commented on her not having a mask (just weeks before the mandate would be dropped, as if anything will have changed in that time). We can reasonably foresee this sort of treatment of the non-compliant getting worse if passports are permitted by businesses. These people are already often stared at and mocked for their dress and beliefs. My husband has been asked many times by different Amish, he's interacted with, if they'd be allowed in stores if they don't get the Covid vaccine, and a couple years ago I would never have thought the answer could potentially be "NO."

These people, I have come to know, are to be admired and revered for their work ethic, their love for their neighbors, their sense of community, their sense of humility, and their faith and devotion lived out daily in the most tangible of ways. Our nation was founded on religious freedom and allowing vaccine passports would greatly undermine these people's rights to privacy, as well as the precious religious freedom their lives' encompass as well as my family's. We cannot stand by and watch our neighbors and our children become second class citizens forced to shop in some sort of post vax passport black market or scrounge for places to do business. We cannot allow them to be required to drink out of designated water fountains, we will not stand by and see them marked as Pariahs by a yellow star, a red letter, a mask or even by the label of being "unvaccinated" and by supposedly being disease spreaders not fit for interacting in or with society. It is not ok to discriminate against any person or group of people and it is NOT ok for the state to allow this sort of discrimination or even the potential deprivation these passports would cause if allowed to be implemented. Once society crosses this line there will be no going back.

I appreciate the devastation Covid has caused in Ohio and the world, but our rights need to supersede any temporary crisis, not ebb and flow with the supposed science of a time from some special, designated, scientific body (by which any opposing views/science are suppressed at every front). A sort of science promoted by politics or a media with corporate and conflicting interests. As anyone that has been a student to history knows that "science" (has through-out time) been a seemingly rational excuse

to discriminate against others. We need to be trusted with the responsibility inherently given us by our existence here on earth. We know to stay away from others when we're ill, we know to wash our hands we have a basic understanding of how our immune systems work. Our bodily autonomy should not be given over to a person or agency we did not vote for, which has the propensity to hand our rights over to Prep Act protected Pharmaceutical companies in blind faith. We deserve to have our inalienable rights protected. I know these words are a feeble effort to help you to see a different perspective, but I'm sure we all realize that not stopping these passports would be opening a Pandora's Box of discrimination that would not be confined to any people group and would wreak havoc on our society. It could be worse than what Covid has done and even more man-made. If you've not already considered any of the points I've tried to make, please take the time to allow them to sink in.

Thank you so much for your time and the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on the urgent need for HB248!