

May 22, 2021

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

My name is Rebecca Rates, and I am a former healthcare employee. The reason I support HB 248 is because it is imperative that we maintain our right to make our own personal decisions regarding vaccine choice and other individual healthcare decisions. It is also important that HIPAA and our right to privacy be maintained.

It is especially crucial that COVID not continue to be used as a means to further divide the American people, resulting in discrimination based upon our rights to choose to be vaccinated or to remain unvaccinated, and to wear a mask or not.

Upon a recent visit to my dental office, I was asked about whether I'd received the vaccine and then heavily pressured by my hygienist to get it while having my teeth cleaned. I have been a patient for several years.

I told my hygienist that I take measures to support a healthy immune system and that I have concerns over the serious reactions that have been reported vs. the chances of beating the virus. I said that I believe this vaccine could potentially be harmful to our natural immune systems. Given that I am a healthy individual, and there are effective treatments available, I have determined the vaccine is not the right choice for me.

The hygienist continued on saying she had "Run out to get the shot immediately, as soon as it became available to her." Then she said "Everyone being vaccinated is the only way to achieve herd immunity."

I was made to feel that my choice was the wrong choice, and she implied that I didn't care about the rest of society in making that decision. I experienced the same level of disapproval from my dentist when she later came to check my teeth.

I don't believe this type of pressure is healthy or appropriate. It has the potential to be far more damaging to everyone in the long run, and particularly to children. The toll will ultimately affect the physical & mental well-being of every individual.

I have two young grandchildren and I am afraid, that if this is allowed to continue, we will all be heavily discriminated against, including school-age children being segregated into classrooms of “vaccinated” and “non-vaccinated.” My 8-year old grandson has become phobic about hand washing and touching anyone over the past year. This saddens me tremendously.

If we allow this to occur, what will be next? Will people be subjected to being separated into groups on buses, planes, trains and at public events? Will we be forced to carry Vaccine Passports to travel or carry our vaccination status on our driver’s licenses in order to shop at our local stores? Will employees be fired from their jobs for deciding the vaccines aren’t right for them?

We must take the necessary steps to protect our Rights to Healthcare privacy, the Right to make our own Personal Healthcare Decisions & to Prevent Discrimination.

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

Sincerely,

*Rebecca Rates*