

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 Valerie Sharritts and I have taught 39 years as a calculus instructor in a private school system. I am not speaking on behalf of the school system. My testimony represents my personal thoughts. I support House Bill 248 and would like to share my thoughts on why this Bill is important to me.

I am genuinely concerned that the fear in others will impede my own freedom of choice in how to work, shop, to travel and experience life. My teaching contract for next year contains language that states: "The Teacher-Minister will provide acceptable proof that s/he is in satisfactory state of health and is free from communicable disease, if the School so requires." I have clearly worked within this system without needing proof thus far. What in the future will occur that would incite the administration to need to act on this statement? What is acceptable proof? Will my own natural immunity from disease such as covid or will my doctor's note be sufficient or are they paving the way to vaccine passports? If I decline such treatment will my job become in jeopardy? When is that pressure from an employer going to exist and begin to discriminate? For some it already does. A friend who has been told not to vaccinate is already feeling the shift in demeanor and I see a shift in the demeanor in my own workplace. In a personal conversation, this was stated, "All these people not getting vaccinated are causing us to not get back to normal." A college worker told me "I just got the vaccine, I saw it as the only way out, I didn't really have a choice". It's clearly in the news that college after college is already going to discriminate a non-vaccinated students ability to participate fully in the college experience and growth. While there are many who are willing to take the EUA treatment there are many who are getting this by feeling coerced with no choice. Why would you need to coerce a student into an EUA treatment with a scholarship. Is this not an act of discrimination and separation within this age group? I am very aware of many places of business that has already demanded (or strongly encouraged) their employees be "vaccinated from CV19" in order to maintain their jobs or in order to make their clients feel safe. That decision appears to me that they were making a choice not based on the well being of their employees but on the perception of their clients; it made me think even more the importance of HB 248. I have great concern for that worker who cannot or should not get any vaccine and yet is pressured to in order to keep their job. I am not writing this testimony to out any particular company or point the finger or tattle but to call attention to the reality of what is happening in the community. Mandating masks for one set of people setting them aside and not allowing them to participate

freely in the businesses and activities is discrimination. I feel whole heartedly that while we want a healthy community and I understand businesses need to provide that confidence to their customers; there are many ways of obtaining this and that the personal decision to accept or decline our public and private sector should remain neutral without discrimination. To demand vaccines or require vaccine passports or any such item in the state of Ohio is contrary to retaining our freedom for all.

In August of this year I returned to the classroom. Obviously, It has not looked or felt like any other year. As the teacher, I've been all in. I taught kids who were in the classroom and on line at the same time, a new lesson every day. I'm not only a mathematics teacher; I am the ski advisor for the school. I am a PSIA certified instructor for 16 years and I've taught motorcycle safety for 6 and have over 62,000 miles on my motorcycle. I was one of a few ski advisors in Ohio schools that built a ski club, got a bus, got on the bus and took 30+ kids to ski during the winter each week. (As well as taught ski lessons while at the resort.) My ski club kids were the only (sport) group at our school that I know of that did not end up having the entire group self quarantine at some point. I am a strong woman educator. I've mitigated this entire year through many situations with others safety in mind. My point in establishing this is I understand risk and work to understand what creates risk and how to mitigate those risks. I want that freedom to make my own health decisions as well as freedom for those of my children and grandchildren and to not be discriminated against for these decisions.

I think it is also important to understand why my reaching out matters. I've never found reason in my 60 years of life to write a letter of testimony or call or write my legislators as I have on this bill HB248. I became increasingly aware of my need to listen and be involved to protect my freedom. I have contacted my district representative as well and I'm sure I've got more to learn about how the process and right to be involved works. I have listened to the entire testimony when Rep Gross introduced HB 248 and I encourage all representatives to listen to her. I pray for all those involved in the committee and for those who are involved in caring about this discussion. As stated hypocrisy is truly evident in our community, I hope that we as a people can fight for truth and freedom but with 'the decorum, respect and grace' that Chairman Lipps requested. Thank you all once again for this opportunity to provide testimony on the need for and urgency of House Bill 248.

Sincerely,  
Valerie Sharritts