

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 Kenya Smith. I am a black owned business owner, father of 3 and grandfather of 6. I am writing to express my support of House Bill 248 for many reasons.

When I decided to get vaccinated it was because I received a phone call from one of my grandchildren. He missed me terribly. Then I got another call, it was from my first grandson. He was crying because 2020 was over. He didn't want it to be over but I expressed to him that we all need to be rid of 2020 because it means we're moving forward. He continued to tell me how much he misses me. My first born grandson just turned 9 this year and I'll be traveling to see them on the 3rd.

I made the decision to get vaccinated because I want to see them and I want to do it safely. I mentioned my race for a reason, and it's because I'm sure you're very well aware of the fact that African-American have an issue with this vaccination. I'm one of them. I was not going to get it just like I was not going to get the flu shot this year but decided to do so because, well if I get sick at least we can rule something out. The fact is, just as we can't really pinpoint where it came from, the fact remains that even with the uncertainty of ALL of this I don't want to die.

As a basketball trainer and coach I want to keep others safe but I will not discriminate against those who get trained because their family has religious, philosophical or moral beliefs that will not allow them to partake in this vaccine. For any company or entity to treat someone as less than because of whether they do so or not is terribly wrong. It pains me to think that one of the children that I train and coach could be bullied, set apart from others or discriminated against because of this. Everyone has a right to choose what they do with their own bodies and its no one else's business.

I am also a husband with one of my 3 children living at home. I could not imagine my son being teased because he got the vaccine. Why do we even need to have a discussion over someone who may not receive it? I refuse to let my son's privacy and medical information be shared with anyone outside of our family unless he chooses to do so as an adult, and I stand with those who do the same.

Thank you kindly for your time and consideration.

Kenya L. Smith