

**The Ohio House of Representatives**  
**House Health Committee**  
**Substitute House Bill 248**

Proponent Testimony  
Zachary K. West  
June 8, 2021

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the Ohio House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Substitute House Bill 248.

The medical ethics principle of informed consent maintains that patients have the right to receive information pertaining to their medical diagnosis, be permitted to inquire of the diagnosis, and have offered an explanation of the risks and benefits of all available options so that they may arrive at a well-considered medical decision. The medical ethics principle of autonomy requires that the patient retain the ultimate decision making responsibility when it comes to their health. As an Ohio native and practicing board certified internal medicine physician, I am encouraged to see the State of Ohio taking the necessary steps with Sub. H.B. 248 (lines 70-81) in upholding a citizen's right to make their own healthcare decisions and to do such without fear of penalty or retribution.

I, like countless others, have been subjected to the dilemma of either undergoing an employer mandated medical intervention, being forced to publicly reveal my private medical information, or face termination of employment. During a prior hospital employment, the employer decreed that all employees must receive an influenza vaccine. Upon my inquiry into the policy, I was informed that those not receiving the vaccine would be required to wear a face mask at all times until the policy was "lifted" by hospital administration. No exceptions were made and a failure to comply would result in termination. The policy only applied to employees in the hospital as neither visitors nor patients were required to wear a mask or have their vaccination status questioned upon entry. I questioned the effectiveness of this policy which the administration argued was to decrease annual influenza rates. The policy was effective at establishing a "branding" in the public arena of employees that decided to decline the employer mandated medical intervention. The subsequent involuntary disclosure of private health information came with ridicule from other employees as my vaccination status was now on full public display and therefore available for extortion. The situation resulted in either being forced to surrender my right to personal medical decisions or the involuntary disclosure of private health information. Sub. H.B. 248 (lines 112-113, 118, 130-150) rectifies these dilemmas and protects an employee's private health information (vaccination status) while allowing the employee to rightfully remain in control over decisions impacting their personal health.

Please support Sub. H.B. 248 and uphold the rights of Ohio's citizens to make personal medical decisions free from fear of retribution or discrimination and ensure privacy as it relates to those decisions.

Sincerely,

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