

HB 248: To Prohibit Required Vaccination Status
Opponent Testimony: Roma Amin
Ohio House Health Committee
June 15, 2021

I appreciate the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 248. I am gravely concerned by this legislation. Vaccines are part of the crucial public health framework that protects us and our community from many vaccine-preventable diseases. Thanks to vaccines, we live in a safer, healthier place than generations before. HB 248 is deeply troubling, as it would give more diseases (some far deadlier and more contagious than COVID-19) the opportunity to run rampant, generate avoidable health care expenses, and most importantly, cost us lives.

As a family physician, I take care of patients from all ages, backgrounds, and political views. I would like share two patient cases that shape my testimony opposing this bill. Four years ago, I had a pregnant patient whose initial pregnancy lab work revealed that one of childhood chickenpox vaccines had worn off. I couldn't give her a booster vaccine because she was pregnant, but our plan had been to give it to her after she delivered. Unfortunately, a colleague at work brought her unvaccinated child to work against office policy, transmitted the chickenpox to my patient, and both my patient and her unborn child died. The second was an immunocompromised pediatric patient who couldn't receive vaccines because of their cancer status. She was isolated from her peers until she enrolled in public school. Her family was fully vaccinated, but her parents were terrified that she would somehow get sick from a younger neighbor. Once she enrolled in public school, which required certain basic vaccines for all students, she completely flourished. Her parents were able to trust the systems that were kept in place for children like their daughter. My patient was able to make friends and learn and play. My patients – your constituents - and their stories shape the way in which I practice medicine, and I hope that these stories and their lives affect the way in which we move forward as a state.

Through vaccinations, we not only provide critical protection for infants, young children, and immunocompromised individuals but also we keep ourselves, our families, and our neighbors safe. We have come take the success of vaccinations for granted as we all benefit from their protection every single day. Because of vaccines, we live our daily lives largely safe from many diseases that once spread through the population unchecked. We cannot afford to risk weakening that protection with HB 248. Vaccinations do not take away our freedoms; vaccinations *give* us freedom.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns, and once again, I urge the committee to reject HB 248 to keep Ohioans safe and avoid dangerous consequences for our state.