

**HB 248: To Prohibit Required Vaccination Status**  
**Opponent Testimony: Thomas “TJ” Atchison**  
**Ohio House Health Committee**  
**June 15, 2021**

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I appreciate the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 248. I am gravely concerned by this legislation, as it would significantly weaken the robust public health framework that protects us from the devastation of many vaccine-preventable diseases. HB 248 does much more than prevent mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations, as it would actually apply to ALL vaccinations. This bill would decimate our progress in public health in the past century and hinder our efforts to fight communicable diseases in the years to come.

Thanks to vaccines, we live in a safer, healthier place than our forefathers before us did. Vaccinations are truly one of public health’s greatest success stories. Through continued scientific breakthroughs, we continue to be spared from a multitude of setbacks and losses. 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 exorbitant, avoidable health care expenses, and most importantly, cost us lives.

UNICEF reports an estimated 20 million children’s lives worldwide were saved by measles vaccinations between 2000 and 2016. Global polio cases have rapidly declined by over 99.9% in just over 30 years due largely to vaccinations. Additionally, a study published earlier this year found that an estimated 69 million lives will be saved by vaccinations against 10 major pathogens between 2000 and 2030.

The only lens through which HB 248 is intellectually honest is one of libertarian advocacy for complete freedom of choice in all walks of life. However, this viewpoint is held by an extreme minority of supporters of this bill. The individuals attempting to hoist this petard are not engaged in similarly boisterous advocacy efforts for removing fire departments, public water treatment plants, or stoplights in the name of complete freedom. Regardless, the individuals who currently stand with both barrels trained expertly on their phalanges hold up “governmental tyranny” as the mask by which they have chosen to hide the true objects of their inattention, namely: scientific reason, and discomfort of any kind. Vaccines are not an opinion. They are rooted in the most basic concepts of immunology and philosophy. Vaccines are among the cornerstones of modern medicine, and any legislation aiming to reduce their usage in the general public is as malicious as it is uninformed. Vaccines are not fun. Needles are scary and they hurt a little bit. Also, sometimes your arm gets sore after being vaccinated. For the vast majority of people, this is the extent at which vaccines will negatively affect their lives. That is hardly a justification on which to base an entire public policy. Jokes on TikTok purposefully misinterpreted by individuals with malintent is an even worse one.

Through vaccinations we not only provide critical protection for infants, young children, and immunocompromised individuals, but we keep ourselves, our families, and our neighbors safe. We have come to 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.