

HB 248: To Prohibit Required Vaccination Status
Opponent Testimony: Dr Spencer Conte, DO
Ohio House Health Committee
June 15, 2021

I appreciate the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 248. As a family medicine physician, who has spent many years studying, learning, and taking care of a wide variety of individuals, I am gravely concerned by this legislation and the significant harm which will come from it.

It would significantly weaken the robust public health framework that protects us from the devastation of many vaccine-preventable diseases. 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, while proving to be more costly to each and every citizen in our state.

Thanks to vaccines, we live in a safer, healthier place than our ancestors 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.

I remember the first patient that I saw who had been crippled with polio from an early age. I remember him lying there ravaged on the hospital bed in the ICU, sick from a common cold; one that you or I would have no trouble fighting off. He had no muscle tone. He couldn't eat, speak, or breathe on his own. And he was one of the "lucky ones" who survived polio.

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.

Vaccines are a direct contributor to economic gains, too. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that for every \$1 spent on childhood vaccination programs, our country saves about \$10.90 in health care costs, and that routine vaccination of children born between 1994 and 2018 has saved our country close to \$406 billion in medical costs and \$1.88 trillion in total society costs.

Through vaccinations, we provide critical protection for infants, young children, and immunocompromised individuals (like many of my patients and your neighbors, friends, and family members). We take for granted the success of vaccinations as we all benefit from their protection every single day. As a father of two young children, we have relied on older children getting vaccines until our young ones are old enough to get theirs; knowing that they will, in turn, be helping their classmates. Because of vaccines, we live our daily lives largely safe from many diseases that once spread through the population unchecked. We cannot afford weakening that protection, especially since we don't have great treatments/cures for people who suffer these illnesses. While saving us money, vaccinations allow us to enjoy a greater freedom than anywhere else in the world or at any time in history.

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