

Respected Chairman Lipps, Vice-Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo and members of the House Health Committee

My name is Vignesh Doraiswamy and I am a physician trained in internal medicine and pediatrics. I live and work right here in Columbus, Ohio.

Proponents of this bill may talk about our history, the Founders of this great country, and fundamental rights. I want to remind everyone of the words of one our most incredible founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin himself:

“In 1736 I lost one of my sons, a fine boy of four years old, by the smallpox taken in the common way. I long regretted bitterly and still regret that I had not given it to him by inoculation.”

Other folks will talk about adults with transplants, cancer or weak immune systems and vaccines matter a lot to them too, but I am here to talk to you today about children.

I have seen children get sick and die of vaccine preventable illnesses. When I was a medical student, I saw a child die of meningococemia, and watched her parents grieve as the infection took over. They could not even say goodbye to her while she was still awake as it quickly overwhelmed and shut down her body. This was preventable with a vaccine.

As a resident physician, I was in an area where some chose not to vaccinate their children and watched one battle life-threatening sepsis from pneumococcus and another who needed a breathing tube emergently as he fought epiglottitis. I have vivid memories of watching their parents grieve and mourn. This was preventable with a vaccine.

Some will say not everyone dies from their illness, which is true. However, even the children who survive can suffer a lot. I watched a healthy child who caught pertussis go from walking into the emergency department to suffering permanent brain damage and needing a breathing tube in his neck and a feeding tube in his belly. Another vaccine preventable illness.

I spent a few of my later school years in South India where I saw many children who were paralyzed from polio. There is a reason that when we think of polio, we think back to FDR in the 1930s and 40s, and not what I saw as recently as the 2000s. However, after a great vaccination campaign they went from India having 60% of the world's cases in 2009, to the eradication of polio in the region by 2014.

I wish I could tell you that my colleagues and I do not have other similar stories. There are safe vaccines that prevent every single one of these diseases I mentioned. Every single one.

Over the last year, we have all seen what rampant infections running amok can do. We are now being subjected to disinformation throughout the internet and social media, that threatens the very “normal” we have been used to. It is up to our elected leaders to ensure that we do not return to a time where the stories I told you today, become a part of everyday life. I started with a quote from Benjamin Franklin and here is how he finished it:

“This I mention for the sake of the parents who omit that operation, on the supposition that they should never forgive themselves if a child died under it; my example showing that the regret may be the same either way, and that, therefore, the safer should be chosen”

Ben Franklin concluded that the safer option should be chosen. Vaccines are very safe. They are very effective.

Therefore, I urge you to vote against HB248.

Thank you for your time and consideration.