

The Ohio House of Representatives
House Health Committee
Representative Scott Lipps, Chair

**HB248 (Vaccine Choice HB248 (Vaccine Choice and Anti-Discrimination Act)
Opponent Testimony
June 15, 2021**

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

My name is Sara Guerrero-Duby, I am a pediatrician, a proud graduate of THE Ohio State University College of Medicine, a Veteran of the USAF Medical Corp, and I have had the privilege of caring for Ohio's children for decades. As a matter of fact, State Rep Emilia Sykes gave me permission to share that I was her pediatrician in Akron while she was growing up, crediting my influence on any of her vaccine advocacy. I am also the most recent winner of the CDC Childhood Immunization Award for the state of Ohio, recognized by this Ohio Senate Proclamation, sponsored by former Senator Peggy Lehner.

I am currently an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, for Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine, as a General Academic Pediatrician. At Dayton Children's Hospital, I provide primary care for children, and train the next generation of pediatricians.

Our hospital team cares for more than 320,000 children from throughout 20 counties in West/Central Ohio. On behalf of the hundreds of physicians, clinical staff and employees at Dayton Children's Hospital, I'm here to share our grave concern about HB 248 -11 and tell you this bill would be a huge step backward for children's health.

Immunizing children is one of the single greatest public health achievements of the last century. Today, most children in the United States lead much healthier lives and parents live with much less anxiety and worry over infections during childhood. Immunizations have led to a significant decrease in rates of vaccine-preventable diseases and have made a significant impact on the health of children. We are deeply concerned that this legislation will destroy the public health framework that has prevented so many potentially lethal diseases that we used to see decades ago. It removes a key motivating factor for parents to take children to see their health care provider – which will have catastrophic, long-term effects on both the mental and physical health of children and adolescents.

This legislation would apply to any and all childhood vaccines. It would prohibit any entity from requiring or requesting any vaccine information. This legislation would mean that schools and childcare facilities would not be able to request whether children are vaccinated or not, and it would prevent an entity from maintaining a record of vaccination for children. This means we wouldn't have the necessary information to track and reduce exposure should any outbreak occur – include contagious diseases found in other parts of the world, like measles, hepatitis, rotavirus and meningitis.

As a primary care pediatrician, I spend a great deal of time talking to parents about the value and the need for vaccinations. We have a responsibility to protect all children and stand by the facts that vaccines are safe and effective, but only if the majority of children receive them. Ohio's vaccination rates are already among the lowest in the US, leading to a multitude of poor health outcomes for

children. Low vaccination rates put all children at risk, especially those who are immune-compromised, including newborns and infants who may not have had the opportunity to receive life-saving protection from immunizations. With just one year of Pandemic life and limited access to primary care, vaccine rates have decreased almost 50% across the US. What will happen if we further de-emphasize the importance and safety of vaccines?

Currently, Ohio law allows for parents to opt out of any or all vaccines for medical reasons, religious or philosophical beliefs, which is considered a very lenient approach in comparison to other states. Most states do not allow for philosophical belief exemptions, unlike Ohio.

Vaccine-preventable diseases also have a cost impact, resulting in doctor's visits, hospitalizations, and premature deaths. Sick children miss school and can also cause parents to lose time from work, thus impacting academic and economic productivity.

HB 248-11 is not good for kid's health or Ohio and I urge you to vote against this bill.

Thank you, Chairman Lipps, Vice Chairman Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the Ohio House Health Committee, for the opportunity to share my views in opposition to House Bill 248.