



HB 248: Opponent Testimony
House Health Committee
June 15, 2021
Stephanie Keinath, Vice President
Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo and members of the House Health Committee, my name is Stephanie Keinath and I'm the Vice President of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce. I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to House Bill 248 today. As the leading voice of business in the Dayton region, the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce represents over 2200 members across nine counties in southwest Ohio. For our members, and the business community as a whole, HB 248 would represent a dangerous infringement on employers' ability to manage their businesses and to make decisions that impact the safety of their workforce, clients and partners.

Since March of 2020, employers across Ohio have been key partners in stopping the spread of Covid-19 in our state. Employers rapidly implemented new health and safety practices, enforcing the Governor's emergency health orders and constantly pivoting to meet the changing demands and threats of the pandemic. As we, thankfully, emerge from the other side of the pandemic, employers are thoughtfully exploring how to safely bring back employees who have worked remotely, reconnect with clients and teams, and recover from the losses and hardships of the last fifteen months.

We strongly believe that employers in Ohio should have the freedom to operate their businesses, to make decisions about protecting their workforce and to develop the health and safety policies and practices that meet the needs of their individual workplaces & industries. Beyond the Covid-19 pandemic, HB 248 would apply to all vaccinations, opening up a challenge for employers to navigate the dangers of all communicable diseases in the years to come.

As current Ohio law allows for school immunization exemptions for medical, religious, or reasons of conscience (known as the philosophical exemption), and most businesses allow for flexibility in regard to vaccinations, we question the need for HB 248-11. This overly broad proposal would undermine employer autonomy and cause severe disruption to our state's health, economy, and way of life.

Thank you for your consideration, and I urge you to reject HB 248 as harmful to the business community, to employer autonomy and to the economic vibrancy of our state.