

HB 248: To Prohibit Required Vaccination Status
Opponent Testimony: Karen G. King, MD
Ohio House Health Committee
June 15, 2021

I appreciate the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 248. As a practicing Ob/Gyn physician in Columbus Ohio, 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. It also places our pregnant mothers and their unborn infants at greater risk of pregnancy complications, as COVID-19 infections also increase risks including, but not limited to, blood clots and fetal growth restriction. Additional care and monitoring are indicated for pregnant women during their pregnancy due to potential complications of the disease, NOT the vaccine.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends COVID-19 vaccination of all eligible people who are pregnant or may consider pregnancy in the future. There is NO current evidence to suggest mRNA COVID-19 vaccinations have a negative impact upon individuals who are pregnant or upon fertility. Vaccinated and breastfeeding mothers have been found to pass COVID-19 antibodies to their infants, which can be protective.

Before being approved for emergency use, all three COVID-19 vaccines were subjected to comprehensive testing and clinical trials, and severe adverse side effects are overall extremely rare.

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 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. 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.

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 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.