

HB 248: To Prohibit Required Vaccination Status
Opponent Testimony: Janice Lanier JD RN
Ohio House Health Committee
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 248. I am a registered nurse and a mother/grandmother/great grandmother. I am old enough to have personally experienced the various childhood illnesses that, thanks to vaccines, are seldom a health threat today. I also lived through the polio scare before the Salk vaccine became a routine part of one's childhood immunizations. Hearing about my classmates becoming dependent on iron lungs and experiencing paralysis was terrifying to me. Fear of losing my eyesight following a bout with measles was an experience I would not wish on anyone, especially a 6-year-old child who had no choice but to lie in bed shaking with fear. That child was me. While polio, measles, mumps, smallpox, and chicken pox have largely become obsolete in Ohio, we saw the ravages contagious disease can cause when COVID 19 mercilessly took thousands of lives these past 18 months. My family alone lost 3 people to the virus, so I am not speaking hypothetically.

Similar to measles, mumps, polio etc., a vaccine became the answer to stopping the toll of COVID in the US and elsewhere. There was finally a path back not only to healthy bodies, but also to a healthy economy. Human ingenuity, dedication, and hard work led to the unprecedented development of lifesaving preventative medicines that could be administered free of charge to anyone. People could return to work, to school, to leisure activities, to restaurants, concerts, sporting events, and vacations. All good right?

Wait—not so fast. Loud voices began to be heard in the halls of the Ohio Statehouse. “No one is going to tell Ohioans they have to get one of these vaccines or wear a mask. We value our liberty and freedom above everything else so stop everything!” A law change (HB 248) was introduced that would seriously hamper efforts to get enough people vaccinated to achieve herd immunity from COVID or any communicable disease. Despite the amazing work of scientists to develop effective, safe vaccines to fight COVID, people relying on questionable physician and nurse “expertise” are coming to the Ohio General Assembly raising unsubstantiated claims about the COVID vaccines that defy common sense not to mention real science. I have been fully vaccinated since mid-February, and despite the rampant conspiracy theories being advanced before the Ohio House Health Committee by proponents of HB 248, I have not become magnetized nor was a microchip inserted into my body when the vaccine was administered. In fact I have had no side effects other than to have avoided COVID 19.

HB 248 goes way beyond acknowledging and respecting legitimate reasons for refusing to be vaccinated. The bill would actually apply to ALL vaccinations. It would decimate progress made in public health over the past century and hinder efforts to fight communicable diseases in the years to come. Further, the bill actually infringes on my right to protect myself, my colleagues,

employees, friends, and my loved ones from exposure to COVID or any contagious disease by saying a person cannot “restrict in any way the enjoyment of privileges enjoyed by others based on their refusal to receive a specific vaccine”. In other words, I cannot request simple public health precautions be observed such as mask wearing or perhaps handwashing in my own business or possibly even in my own home. This is a dangerous path to trod.

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, ¹ and most importantly, cost us lives.

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.

¹ Vaccines are a direct contributor to economic gains as well as health improvements. 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. Studies by CDC researchers have found that in a typical flu season, influenza imposes an estimated \$87.1 billion economic burden on the country, and health care facilities requiring flu vaccinations among their employees can reduce patients’ risk of contracting influenza or influenza-like illness by 42%.