

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in opposition to House Bill 248. My name is Diane McCourt and I am a nurse here in Ohio.

While I am no longer giving bedside care, I was a nurse in Emergency/Critical Care/Urgent care settings for more than 10 years. I have dedicated my career to keeping patients healthy; immunization plays an important role in that work. I have provided Tdap [vaccinations/medications](#) for acute injuries and prepping patients for emergent surgeries. I have provided flu vaccines in the urgent care setting. I valued the education I was able to provide my patients and felt confident that the vaccines I administered were safe and beneficial. I can think of numerous occasions where I have reviewed textbooks, vaccine inserts and provided evidence-based articles to make sure that my patient is educated on the vaccine which they are receiving. Providing education to my patient's care is something that I have taken pride in throughout my career.

I have never and would never coerce or force a patient to undergo a medical procedure or receive an immunization. Proponents of House Bill 248 have consistently alleged that patients are being forced to receive a vaccine. This is not only inaccurate, but offensive to caregivers like me who take pride in respecting and caring for our patients. Patient's informed consent is critical, and I have worked hard through my care to ensure that Ohioians (and those visiting Ohio) that I cared for were informed about all aspects of their medical care.

House Bill 248 would dramatically expand vaccine exemption for children entering school or a state licensed childcare center. Additionally, the bill places new restrictions on hospitals and businesses that would place patients, customers, and employees at risk. In addition to significant expansion of vaccine exemptions the bill also prohibits hospitals and other healthcare facilities from taking any steps to control the spread of infectious disease.

House bill 248 would create a disincentive for parents to immunize by broadening the already broad exemptions for childcare and K-12 while also allowing for verbal exceptions. Parents who choose to immunize must schedule an appointment with their primary care provider or visit a pharmacy or health department. They must also submit a form signed by a provider detailing their child's immunization record or attesting to a medical contraindication. Under House Bill 248 parents who either choose not to immunize or simply do not feel like filling out the form could call the school or daycare and claim a medical or nonmedical exception with no documentation. As a result, Ohio's immunization rates would suffer. It is to note, that vaccines do not protect the vaccinated 100%. If the majority do not vaccinate then even the vaccinated become at risk to contract the disease in which they have tried to prevent.

No one would argue that immunization is not a personal choice for patients or their parents, however that decision can have public consequences. Truthfully, no one is forced to receive an immunization or discriminated against for their decision to decline an immunization. Ohio's current vaccine laws for children include both medical and non-medical exceptions. Further, hospitals that require flu vaccination also grant exceptions to employees. Vaccine injuries are incredibly rare, and far more people are harmed, sometimes fatally, by vaccine-preventable diseases.

Further, House Bill 248 would cripple our ability to have reliable data on immunization rates and status of immunization for children in the event of an outbreak. This information is not public; however, it is used by a school district or health department in determining which children are at risk for certain

diseases. This information is especially important to parents of immune-compromised children who cannot receive a vaccine.

Anti-vaccine activists have consistently tried to diminish confidence in vaccination and have made baseless accusations about the conduct of caregivers like me who care for Ohioians.

Finally, I hope you understand that risks and complications from vaccine preventable diseases pose a significant risk to the health and freedom of all Ohioians. Ohio's healthcare caregivers are concerned about this legislation. We are the people you trust with the health of your family and we are asking you to make the right decision. On behalf of myself, my family, and the patients I have cared for I hope you will oppose this harmful legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Diane McCourt