

HB 248: To Prohibit Required Vaccination Status
Opponent Testimony: [NAME]
Ohio House Health Committee
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I appreciate the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 248. 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. 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.

Not long after my father opened his practice in my home town of Norwalk, he set up one of the first polio vaccine clinics. It was a new vaccine, but people trusted in the science which was, and is, sound. Today, we as a society no longer fear polio outbreaks. Nor do we have summer days where we take a nap because theaters, pools, stadiums, and libraries are closed due to a polio outbreak. Well, we didn't until 2020 and Covid. Vaccines keep us safe, as individuals, and as a society. We no longer suffer the centuries old fear of smallpox due to its elimination from this earth through the use of vaccines. I, for one, do not want to return to a time when these almost extinct diseases swept across the land, killing or maiming millions.

Now, we are faced with a new disease, Covid, one that has killed almost one million Americans. It is not like the flu – it is far worse, with some survivors left with lingering symptoms much like post-polio patients. Symptoms they will have for the rest of their lives. One of my patients, 36 years old, tested positive in Dec. 2020. They are still not able to work due to their severe shortness of breath, a lingering symptom of Covid. Like my post-polio patents, the vaccine did not come out soon enough for them.

Before being approved for emergency use, all three Covid vaccines being used were subjected to comprehensive testing and clinical trials. Adverse side effects from the vaccines are extremely rare, unlike the Covid long haulers which some studies suggest occurs in 10-30 percentage of positive cases. The symptoms range from shortness of breath, to “brain fog”, insomnia, and some heart concerns, not to mention permanent loss of smell and taste.

The mRNA vaccines are extremely safe. Rumors in social media that they some how rewrite a person's DNA are false. I have a Masters in Human Genetics from the University of Cincinnati and that is simply not how this works. This is why the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend Covid 19 vaccines to all persons who are eligible, including those who are pregnant or are thinking about getting pregnant.

In medicine, we often have to weigh the pros and cons of a treatment. In the case of vaccines, the pros of getting a vaccine FAR outweigh any negatives, for both the individual and society.

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.

Vaccines are a direct contributor to economic gains, too. 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%.

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 to 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.