



June 10, 2021

Emily R. Miller, MD, MS
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Re: Opponent Testimony for HB248

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee, thank you sincerely for the opportunity to provide testimony on *House Bill 248*.

My name is Emily Miller, MD, MS, FAAP. I am a board-certified pediatrician and a practicing neonatologist at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. In addition to my medical training, I have a Master's degree in physiology and biophysics and am a current health policy scholar with the Academic Pediatric Association.

I am testifying against HB248, which will destroy our current public health framework that prevents outbreaks of potentially lethal diseases, and will directly threaten the lives of the patients I care for.

As a neonatologist, I take care of critically ill newborns in the neonatal intensive care unit. Some are born prematurely, others require surgery, while others have life-threatening infections. They are all immunocompromised and we have strict infection prevention guidelines for staff and families that help us keep these vulnerable infants safe.

Preterm infants are most susceptible to vaccine-preventable diseases, including rotavirus, pertussis ("whooping cough"), and invasive pneumococcal infection. They are more likely to have complications, require hospitalization, and die. The US Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends routine vaccination of these high-risk infants. Further, immunization of all close contacts, a technique called "cocooning," offers additional protection to at-risk preterm infants.

Due to the pandemic, the United States is currently experiencing a decline in vaccination rates across the lifespan. Ohio's vaccination rates are already among the lowest in the US. Low vaccination rates put all children at risk, including premature infants who are immunocompromised or those who cannot receive immunizations.

HB248 threatens how pediatricians take care of children, how we keep them healthy, and how we keep them alive. It will disincentivize any and all vaccination. It will remove the ability for Ohio's public health system to track information critical to preventing outbreaks of contagious diseases. It will prohibit the hospital from keeping my patients safe through infection control measures like masking and isolation from communicable diseases.

All of this will put my fragile patients at enormous risk, and I would be remiss if I did not voice my strong opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

Emily R. Miller, MD, MS, FAAP

References:

1. <https://www.bcbs.com/press-releases/the-blue-cross-blue-shield-association-reports-steep-decline-childhood-vaccinations>
2. <https://avalere.com/insights/updated-analysis-finds-sustained-drop-in-routine-vaccines-through-2020>
3. **Early Childhood Vaccination Status of Preterm Infants.** Annika M. Hofstetter, Elizabeth N. Jacobson, M. Patricia deHart, Janet A. Englund. *Pediatrics* Sep 2019, 144 (3) e20183520; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2018-3520