

Thursday, June 10, 2021

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 Holly Oyster and I am a business owner, mom, and constituent here in Ohio.

I am the mother of a Type 1 Diabetic child. In that role, I am her primary advocate in all things medical and legal. I am also an employer and business owner. Both of those things lead me to oppose HB248.

As an employer, I have an obligation to protect my employees as well as my customers from potential harm, including harm caused by exposure to preventable disease. Expanding exemptions to mandated vaccines will increase the potential risk I allow to both employees and customers. Not only will it allow my employees, who routinely visit manufacturing facilities all over Ohio and the entire United States, interacting with employees at those customer facilities, to contract vaccine-preventable illnesses, but it will allow my employees to further expose our customers, and their own families. If you take away my ability to mandate a safe, effective vaccine in my business, you unnecessarily put my employees and those of other facilities at risk.

As a Type 1 Diabetic, my 14-year-old daughter is at higher risk of complications and adverse outcomes from many vaccine-preventable illnesses. She is as fully vaccinated as I can make her, but it is only common sense to require a general population that is sufficiently vaccinated that the risk to my child is minimized. Perhaps others feel the risk to themselves is minor – the illness in question is not known to cause major complications for someone of their age, general health, or with their physical condition.

We, as human beings, live in a society. Living in a society means we accept a set of rules, both codified and not, both spoken and unspoken, which make living

in communities possible by minimizing risk to ourselves and others. Rules are a necessary part of that society. Until there is clear scientific proof that vaccines are unsafe, there is no logical or scientific reason to prohibit rules which have a positive outcome for society as a whole. Indeed, there is no logical argument, using sound science instead of disinformation, which supports HB248 and increasing the potential exposure of Ohioans to vaccine-preventable diseases by loosening the requirements granting exceptions to vaccine mandates. Passing HB248 will weaken Ohioans in schools, the workplace, and as citizens of the United States. There are already mechanisms in place for granting exceptions to vaccine mandates based on medical necessity. Passing HB 248 would do nothing but coddle anti-vaccination alarmists who have no proof or even coherent arguments to support their claims. The damage already done to public health by disinformation is already too much. Don't make it worse.

Finally, thanks to this legislation and so many other ill-conceived, anti-science, ridiculous bills put forth by our legislature, Ohio is quickly becoming a laughing stock to the rest of the country. The testimony heard here in this chamber earlier this week has further damaged Ohioans' reputation on the national stage – I saw comments on social media today stating the Ohio was giving Florida a run for its money when it came to stupidity. I have no beef with Florida, but I resent the damage this legislation and others are doing to the reputation of Ohio and her citizens. We are NOT stupid, nor are we anti-science.

In conclusion, I urge the House Health Committee to follow the science, listen to accredited medical professional, listen to Ohioans. We overwhelmingly support vaccination mandates. Please stop catering to the noisy minority of alarmists and anti-science wack jobs. Please oppose this dangerous legislation.

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