

My name is Natalie Segev, MD, MS and I am a practicing pediatrician and Chief Resident at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. I am writing to express my extreme opposition to HB-248 which is a bill that if passed would have immense negative impact on the health of all Ohioans and worsen disparities for those populations that are already underserved.

I have worked at Cincinnati Children's Pediatric Primary Care Clinic that caters to the underserved and disadvantaged population of Hamilton County, mostly residents from Avondale and surrounding areas. As a pediatrician I am passionate about helping these families and children face countless healthcare disparities that result from health inequities. Sometimes, a family struggles to have access to healthcare due to severe financial hardship and we do not see these children at the doctor for years. Families are mandated by schools to have updated vaccination records and therefore many times annual well child visits are scheduled because of this school requirement. Not only are we able to catch these children up on vaccinations at these visits but we are able to address multiple other healthcare illnesses that are preventing these children and families from thriving in school and at home. I worry that if HB-248 passes, these families will not have the incentive to make doctors' visits when a single mom of multiple kids is trying to prioritize three jobs to feed her family and put a roof over their head. This underserved population would miss annual well child visits and continue to be more disadvantaged as they grow up in a community where they already struggle to have equity as underserved minorities.

As a pediatrician in the hospital setting, I have taken care of many children in the pediatric intensive care unit that have suffered from vaccine preventable diseases. I have taken care of a six year old female with injury to the brain as a result of the influenza infection which could have been preventable by vaccines. I have taken care of many young children in the hospital diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough) because they are too young to be vaccinated and/or exposed to others in the home or school environment who are unvaccinated. We are seeing rising numbers of vaccine preventable illnesses in this country that we once thought were diseases constricted to third-world nations. Since the introduction of many vaccines over the past few decades, we have seen childhood deaths dramatically fall, however this is starting to taper off and rise as vaccination rates begin to fall in the United States. I do not want Ohio to be a leader in the trend of dropping vaccinations and rising childhood deaths. Finally, this bill has language that would prevent making it mandatory for hospitals to require employees to wear proper "personal protective equipment" while being exposed to patients with infectious illnesses. This would mean that employees can choose to not wear a mask when taking care of a child with pertussis, tuberculosis, COVID19 or other infectious illness and then move on to take care of another child who is dying from cancer and put that immunocompromised cancer patient at risk for contracting such diseases when it is our duty as a healthcare system and state to protect these patients. I appreciate the opportunity to have my voice heard as a stark advocate for child and family wellbeing, proponent of creating health equity across all populations and a strong opponent against HB-248.

Thank you,

Natalie Segev, MD, MS