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Greetings & Salutations,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 248.

My name is Chris Smith and I serve as the Vice President of the Ohio College Health Association, which is one of the regional affiliates of the American College Health Association. Prior to my career transition into higher education, I served in a variety of capacities for the National Cancer Institute and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) for approximately 12 years. During my final seven years at CDC, I served as a public health advisor within the National Center for Immunizations & Respiratory Diseases and was assigned to the State of Michigan's Immunization program. As a college health and public health professional, I fully support immunizations and immunization requirements.

The American College Health Association, including the regional affiliate the Ohio College Health Association, opposes any state legislation that would 1) restrict colleges and universities from implementing vaccine requirements or 2) restrict or limit colleges and universities from requiring documentation of vaccination status. Ohio House Bill 248-11 seeks to create irreparable harm by:

- Contradicting established public health best practices of vaccination requirements for childcare, school, and college attendance
- Endangering public health infrastructure
- Jeopardizing economic security while concurrently resulting in other significant costs.
- Infringing upon the autonomy of organizations to keep the communities they serve healthy through the proven success of immunization requirements.

COVID-19 provided clear evidence that communicable disease outbreaks can disrupt our day-to-day lives; cause death or chronic illness; and significantly impact commerce,

employment, education, travel, and the economy. The current pandemic has stretched local public health systems beyond their operating capacity and created significant risk for state medical infrastructures. Removing the ability to create immunization requirements will exacerbate the frequency and intensity of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks. Those outbreaks will have tangible impacts and require countless person hours and resources and could easily result in loss of life—a preventable loss.

Beyond the human capital elements, campus outbreaks can negatively impact the economic health and institutional reputation of Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs). The fiscal cost of detailed outbreak management, isolation and quarantine housing, and the treatment of complicated sequelae combined with lost tuition, fees, grants, or other funds can be profound for individual institutions. A series of on-going outbreaks could cause IHEs to close, directly impacting the local and state economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased the mental health needs of our students due to multiple stressors including family illness and/or death, financial adversity, and loneliness as a result of physical distancing and isolation/quarantine requirements. These emotional and mental health impacts represent an additional cost to the IHE.

Ohio currently allows for immunization exemptions (medical, personal belief, and religious) and most businesses allow for flexibility regarding vaccinations. This well-balanced approach equally supports the autonomy of individuals and organizations. HB 248-11 is a broad overreach that devastates accountability, diminishes essential safeguards, and jeopardizes the health of everyone. This legislation does not seek to keep Ohio healthy.

Additionally, clear and complete vaccination records are a recognized standard of medical care. Without vaccination records, patients are at risk for delayed diagnoses, unnecessary medical tests or procedures, and inaccurate or delayed treatment.

The Ohio College Health Association, representing 137 colleges and universities, opposes House Bill 248. We stand in unison with over 85 Ohio professional organizations representing over 1.7 million + Ohioans to petition that HB 248-11 be rejected to maintain the health, safety, and wellness of Ohio's children, families, students and medically vulnerable. Thank you for receiving our testimony.