

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to express opposition to House Bill 248. On behalf of the Ohio Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians (Ohio ACEP) that represents over 1,600 emergency physicians across the State, we fear this bill could have disastrous effects.

Our members work in hospital emergency departments. We treat patients with all illnesses and injuries, day and night.

This bill would prohibit any business, including a hospital, from mandating employees to receive ANY vaccine. It is critically important that hospital staff in emergency departments, critical care units and other places where high risk patients are admitted, do not unduly expose these patients to other diseases. It must remain under the propogative of hospitals and other business to make those decisions to protect their staff and patients.

Much of the testimony in favor of this bill has been focused on the COVID-19 vaccine. Make no mistake that we think it is prudent for as many Ohioans to receive this particular vaccine. We saw the devastating effect of the COVID-19 pandemic firsthand in the emergency department. This vaccine is our best defense against the virus. House Bill 248 goes far beyond the COVID vaccine, however. It would prohibit any requirement for ANY vaccine. As emergency physicians, we often see worse outcomes for people who choose not to get vaccines. We worry if universities and other education institutions do not promote and mandate certain vaccines for their enrollees, we will see an increase of viruses that flourish in communal living environments, such as dormitories.

Vaccines don't only protect the person who receives the vaccine, but also those with compromised immune systems who are around others. This is why having a vaccinated hospital staff is so important to public health.

Vaccines are proven to work. According to World Health Organization estimates, in the United States alone, approximately 42,000 of the 4.1 million children born each year would die early deaths as a result of diseases that could be prevented with vaccines. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates 21 million hospitalizations and 732,000 deaths will be avoided among children born over a 20-year period (1994-2013) because of vaccines. And measles-related deaths declined by 79% between 2000 and 2014 as a result of more widespread global access to the vaccine, saving an estimated 20.3 million lives, also according to the WHO.

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Ohio ACEP encourages lawmakers to review an article published by the US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, titled [Simply put: Vaccinations saves lives](#). Not only does this article note the significant number of lives saved by vaccines, particularly in children, it also highlights the economic benefit vaccines provide by preventing higher healthcare costs of treating diseases that are preventable by vaccines.

We understand this has been a trying year for many. But please don't let fear drive policy decisions. Vaccines are a safe and reliable tool for public health. We should be educating the public on vaccine efficacy and encouraging more people to get appropriate vaccines, not less.

Please oppose House Bill 248.

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