



**House Health Committee  
HB 248 - Opponent Testimony  
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Good morning Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio in opposition of House Bill 248, regarding vaccinations in Ohio.

CDF-Ohio is a statewide non-profit organization which serves as an independent voice for all children. Born out of the civil rights movement, with more than four decades of advocacy in Ohio, it is the mission of the Children's Defense Fund to champion policies and programs that lift children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect, and ensure their access to appropriate and targeted health care, quality education, and nutritional wellness.

HB 248 generally requires exemptions to be granted for required immunizations. These exemptions can be offered verbally or in writing and must be accepted regardless of whether it is a public or private entity. The bill allows for broad exemptions covering medical contraindications, natural immunity, and reasons of conscience including religious and philosophical beliefs. There is no requirement that individuals consult with a physician or other healthcare provider, nor is a provider required to attest to a medical contraindication or natural immunity.

Current law grants exemptions for medical contraindications signed by a physician and for religious and philosophical beliefs for state required vaccines for children entering daycare or school. HB 248 drastically expands these exemptions and will result in fewer children receiving immunizations. HB 248 effectively encourages parents to opt out, which is very poor public health policy.

Vaccinations work to protect individuals from disease, diseases that in past generations killed millions of people and left millions more with life-long disabilities, such as sterility, paralysis, disfigurement, blindness, and respiratory issues. We have all seen pictures of children in iron lungs struggling to breathe, and Pres. Roosevelt confined to a wheelchair because of polio.



Vaccinations are important not only for the individual health of children, but because part of living in society is caring for the welfare and well-being of others. There are many children and adults that cannot be vaccinated because of allergies to vaccine ingredients, certain health conditions, or weakened immune systems. These members of our society depend on as many people as possible getting vaccinated to keep the disease from spreading. This is called herd immunity and it can effectively stop the spread of communicable disease.

During the pandemic Ohio saw a dramatic decline in child immunization, first due to closure of many pediatrician offices at the beginning of the pandemic, and later because parents were hesitant to bring their children to well-child visits for fear of exposing them to COVID. It is vitally important that children be caught up on immunizations as we head into the 2021-22 school year. As Ohio struggles to recover from the COVID pandemic, every member of this committee knows the importance of getting children back into school in-person and full time. One way to ensure this does not happen is to allow children to lapse in their vaccinations. An outbreak of measles or mumps in a school district could mean that hundreds of students will once again be missing school, and unfortunately, for some of those students and their families the consequences will be much more severe than a week or two of missed school.

We should be looking at ways to strengthen Ohio's immunization rates and protect our children from these diseases. Current law allows parents to opt out and we should respect the ability of private employers to make decisions for the benefit of their workers and patients. Vaccines are safe and effective. Many Ohioans are harmed by vaccine preventable disease each year and HB 248 moves our state in the wrong direction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 248.

I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.