

Dear Representative Lipps, Chair, Representative Holmes, Vice Chair and members of the Ohio House Health Committee,

I have recently been made aware of HB 248, Enact Vaccine Choice and Anti-Discrimination Act, and I am writing as a STRONG opponent to this bill.

For the past ten years I have been an advocate for those affected with rare diseases. Several of my family members have a rare disease; some have passed away as a result. The majority of the over 7,000 rare diseases have no cure or treatment and it is estimated that over 1 million Ohioans are affected by one or more rare disease. Out of those affected Ohioans, many suffer from a rare disease that affect their immune system. They cannot receive a vaccination due to their medical conditions. ***They must rely on not only their family members or caregivers being vaccinated but also the general public being vaccinated and the existence of herd immunity.*** The COVID-19 pandemic has had a terrible impact on those suffering from rare diseases. Those individuals have either had medical treatment delayed or stopped due to the fear of contracting COVID-19. Let me cite the case of my husband. He was injured in a fall the week the shutdown started in March and was not able to have surgery to repair a herniated cervical disk until December. During that time, he had to live with nine months of excruciating pain, lack of sleep and reduced functionality before he could finally get relief.

We in the rare disease community are always hopeful in finding a treatment or cure. This process involves clinical trials and eventually approval for that treatment or cure. Such research came to a screeching halt when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. In my family's case, all research on a specific drug was halted due to the travel restrictions that were in place, plus the fear of contacting COVID-19. Much research and clinical trials have fallen to the wayside and many scientists and researchers have had to start all over. Now that vaccinations are in place, that research has begun.

If this legislation is passed, I foresee history repeating itself in regards to the advancement of science and vaccinations. Family has always been important to me. Three family members had or has firsthand experiences with a pandemic, an infectious disease, and cancer. I was fortunate to know my great-great aunt, who was a nurse during World War I. She would tell me stories of those service men that survived the war but only to succumb to the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918.

The second person was my aunt, who contracted polio several months before the vaccination was created and implemented. She lived over 50 years in an iron lung. I saw firsthand how a now preventable disease took a horrendous toll on her family. Money was always tight; family members were displaced and one eventually took his own life.

My final example is my younger sister, who has stage four cancer. She is fighting for her life and currently on chemotherapy. My sister has to be on constant guard as the COVID-19 pandemic intensified. Being told that her husband could not be with her for any of her treatments or doctor visits have been detrimental not only physical but mentally for her. And

when my sister has to be in public, she lives in constant fear of not knowing who is or who is not been vaccinated.

In as much as HB 248 pertains to all vaccines and not just the COVID-19 vaccine, passing this bill would reverse decades of immunity from life-threatening, but vaccine-preventable diseases such as polio. Passing HB 248-11 would not have a terrible negative impact on Ohioans' health, but it would also have a negative impact on the economy and way of life that we already have seen with COVID-19.

I **URGE** this committee **NOT** to pass this legislation.

Sincerely,

Charlene York
Newark, Ohio