



June 18, 2021

Chairman Scott Lipps
Ohio House of Representatives
Health Committee

Re: Opposition HB 248

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the Ohio House Health Committee:

Thank you for allowing us to testify in opposition to HB 248. Nationwide Children's Hospital strongly support immunizations and urge that all children be fully vaccinated. We believe this bill threatens the health of Ohio's children and would create a devastating impact on Ohio's children and families.

As a pediatric physicians, fellows, residents, and advocates for public health, we have seen the incredible impact vaccines have on the health of our children, our communities, and our state. The greatest public health success story over the past 100 years has been the widespread use of vaccines, especially in children. Vaccines are rigorously tested, have an exemplary safety record, and have prevented millions of children from contracting disabling and fatal diseases.

Ohio's current law allows for parental and personal choice. Parents can opt out of any vaccination for medical, religious and/or philosophical beliefs, which is already a very lenient public health approach compared to other states. Regular vaccination consistently remains a strong incentive for parents to attend their child's routine provider well visits due to childcare and schools requiring vaccination records. Vaccines aside, these visits continue to be the foundation to maintaining mental and physical health through regular screening and conversation with medical providers. This bill removes all ability for schools to track critical vaccination information, thus also taking away any previous incentive for families to regularly meet with medical providers.

In 2014, Ohio had the largest outbreak of the measles in a 20-year U.S. history. 383 individual cases were recorded, primarily effecting children. Because of strong public health framework, Ohio was able to track these cases back to under-vaccinated communities, resulting in prompt control and a large vaccine campaign to increase protection through herd immunity. These same critical and complex tracking processes were utilized during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in preventative quarantining if exposed to the deadly virus. This bill will prohibit any and all vaccination records to be shared within schools and employers, eliminating the ability to reduce exposure through public health recording should an outbreak occur.

This legislation seeks to upend our important achievements. While the decision not to vaccinate is an individual freedom, it has great impacts on the community overall. Leaving a child unvaccinated not only leaves that child dangerously susceptible to vaccine-preventable illness, but also allows those diseases

to infest the community. Unvaccinated children and adults who contract a vaccine-preventable illness may spread the disease for days before they show any symptoms, potentially infecting highly populated areas such as grocery stores, places of worship, daycares, and nursing homes. They will likely need to seek medical care for their symptoms, passing through doctor's offices, ambulances, and emergency departments, all while potentially spreading these diseases.

Given these realities, it's no surprise that we have heard from numerous concerned patients and families about the impact HB 248 would have on the health and welfare of our state. Many of our patients who are receiving cutting-edge immunologic therapies for severe genetic diseases like spinal muscular atrophy and Duchenne's muscular dystrophy are not eligible to receive certain vaccines. These families rely on the safety of knowing that they are protected at our institution through use of employee vaccinations and protective equipment requirements. They live normal lives and allow their children to go to school, knowing they are protected through herd immunity and the responsible decisions of the parents within their schools and communities, vaccinating the children that are able. However, this legislation threatens to strip these safety precautions from these families.

It is vital that policy makers stand firm with these families and strongly support vaccine reporting requirements in Ohio. We as medical providers have committed our lives to protecting our communities through strong public health measures like vaccinations and the use of protective equipment. Nationwide Children's believes HB 248 jeopardies the health of Ohio's children now and in the future. We ask you to oppose HB 248.

Thank you for allowing us to comment on HB 248.

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