



Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee, thank you sincerely for the opportunity to provide testimony on *House Bill 248* (HB-248).

My name is Andrew F. Beck, MD, MPH, FAAP. I am a practicing primary care and hospitalist pediatrician at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. I stand in opposition to HB-248, a bill that itself stands in opposition to the health and well-being of Ohioans. I have devoted my professional life to caring for children in the clinical setting and working to pursue better outcomes for children and their families across communities. There are few times when bills come up for debate which have the very real possibility of setting us, our communities, and our children back in the ways HB-248 is poised to do.

HB-248 purports to uphold choice and prevent discrimination. Inadvertently, or perhaps advertently, this bill could actually stand to discriminate against those who are not eligible for or able to participate in key public health activities. Over the years, I have treated many children with illnesses preventable with vaccination. I have cared for infants hospitalized with pertussis (or whooping cough) who spent weeks to months in the hospital, including stays in the intensive care unit. I have seen children with influenza who developed pneumonias that required intubation and mechanical ventilation. And, yes, I have supported children dealing with either acute COVID-19 or Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) following a previous infection with SARS-CoV-2. Nearly all of these children, were too young to be vaccinated and were around others who were unvaccinated. Although we all stand to benefit from vaccines and other public health measures, children feel their effects most acutely.

Vaccines and public health measures like masking represent some of the safest and most effective strategies we have at keeping children and communities healthy. Because of such strategies, children now live to adulthood, free from infectious diseases which previously wiped out scores. Moreover, because of such strategies, we are finally seeing the promise of the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, a scourge that has killed nearly 20,000 Ohioans. The science is clear with study after study underscoring the degree to which benefit outweighs risk. The opposite is true of this bill. The risks HB-248 could promulgate – more lethal yet preventable disease, morbidity experienced disproportionately by children, diminution of science in favor of politics – dramatically outweigh any perceived benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

Andrew F. Beck, MD, MPH, FAAP