



Testimony before the
House Health Committee

House Bill 248

June 19, 2021

Chairman Lipps, ranking member Russo, and members of the House Health Committee, the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners offers this testimony in opposition to House Bill 248, which proposes dramatic and sweeping changes in vaccination policy in Ohio. The Association of Ohio Health Commissioners (AOHC), is the state association representing Ohio's 113 local health departments.

AOHC is solemnly concerned about this legislation, as it would significantly weaken the robust public health framework that protects us from the devastation of many vaccine-preventable diseases. This bill would decimate our progress in public health in the past century and hinder our efforts to fight communicable diseases in the years to come, because it changes policies related to all vaccines, not just COVID-19!

Ohio already has some of the most lenient vaccination requirements in the country. Parents and guardians can currently opt out of ANY vaccination for various reasons – medical, religious, philosophical, etc. This bill will go even further by prohibiting schools and childcare providers from requesting vaccination records and even prohibits parents from voluntarily submitting these records.

Thanks to vaccines, we live in a safer, healthier place than our ancestors before us did. Vaccinations are truly one of public health's greatest success stories. Through continued scientific breakthroughs in this regard, we continue to be protected from a multitude of deadly and contagious communicable diseases.

Worldwide, UNICEF reports an estimated 20 million children's lives have been saved by measles vaccinations between 2000 and 2016. Global polio cases have rapidly declined by over 99.9% in just over 30 years due largely to vaccinations. Additionally, a study published

earlier this year found that an estimated 69 million lives will be saved by vaccinations against 10 major pathogens between 2000 and 2030.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that for every \$1 spent on childhood vaccination programs, our country saves about \$10.90 in health care costs, and that routine vaccination of children born between 1994 and 2018 has saved our country close to \$406 billion in medical costs and \$1.88 trillion in total society costs. Studies by CDC researchers have found that in a typical flu season, influenza imposes an estimated \$87.1 billion economic burden on the country, and health care facilities requiring flu vaccinations among their employees can reduce patients' risk of contracting influenza or influenza-like illness by 42%.

Through vaccinations we not only provide critical protection for infants, young children, and immunocompromised individuals, but we keep ourselves, our families, and our neighbors safe. We have come take the success of vaccinations for granted as we all benefit from their protection every single day. Because of vaccines, we live our daily lives largely safe from many diseases that once spread through the population unchecked. We cannot afford to risk weakening that protection with HB 248. Vaccinations do not take away our freedoms; vaccinations give us freedom.

Thank you for your consideration of local public health's concerns, and once again, we urge the committee to reject HB 248 to keep Ohioans safe and avoid dangerous consequences for our state. We appreciate and respect the many views which have been shared with the committee. AOHC is always open to hearing opinions about how we can improve our vaccination rates in Ohio. We offer our opposition based on the best available science to afford us the opportunity to prevent the spread of communicable disease.