



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 me 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.

I am a pediatrician at Nationwide Children's Hospital and have the pleasure of serving as the medical director for our School Health Services. In that role I oversee more than 15 School Based Health Centers across Franklin county where we work to provide needed health services to at risk children right in their school. We have long partnered with Columbus City School District and many others to ensure kids are healthy and ready to learn. Schools play a critical role in maintaining a healthy safe learning environment at school. We know that education and health are linked- you can't succeed in one without the other. That's why school immunization efforts are so important.

House Bill 248 infringes on the rights (and freedoms) of students and families to expect a safe learning environment for their children at school. School efforts to track and support vaccines allow for families to have better access to critical medicine like the measles and tetanus vaccines. School nurses are front line educators for families to get them needed vaccine information- what vaccines the student needs and when they are due. They also can connect families to a health care provider if they don't have one, pediatricians and schools partnering together to keep school safe.

There are already current laws that exist to allow families with strong objections to choose not to vaccinate. This bill goes beyond that to threaten the overall public health safety of our communities over the objection of very few individuals.

This has been an incredibly challenging year for kids in school. Students are just getting back to normalcy with all in person learning in the fall. It would be devastating to now have to miss school with another serious outbreak such as measles or pertussis. We have to prioritize our children's' health, education, and their future.

Lastly, there are many students who we need to have special consideration. Those are the students who can't get vaccines due to health reasons like cancer or immune deficiencies. These students will be forced to make a terrible decision: stay home in virtual learning for good or risk serious illness or death coming to school- not a choice any family wants or deserves.

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 me to comment on HB248.

Dr. Sara Bode

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