



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. As an allergy/immunology fellow at Nationwide Children's Hospital, I strongly support immunizations and urge that all children be fully vaccinated. I believe this bill threatens the health of Ohio's children and would create a devastating impact on Ohio's children and families.

I was a pediatric resident in Minneapolis, Minnesota when anti-vaccination groups intentionally targeted the Somali community five years ago, spreading baseless claims regarding the measles vaccine. They took advantage of religious communities, hosting mass gatherings at places of worship to spread false information that eventually led to a sudden decrease in vaccination rate for measles, mumps, and rubella among Somali children in the Minneapolis community.

The result was stunning. Within months, we saw a measles outbreak like none seen within the Minneapolis community in generations. We saw children hospitalized with an avoidable childhood illness, one that can cause life-threatening pneumonias and meningitis. While most children recover, not all will. Any avoidable childhood death or life-long injury is unacceptable. Imagine your own child or grandchild dying from or developing a life-altering complications from an illness that was completely preventable.

Some may say that we should give families the choice to vaccinate. Those families that want to protect their own children should be allowed to, and those who do not want to protect their children should have that freedom. Devastating complications of measles occur most commonly in babies, a population that cannot be vaccinated with the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. The immune system does not make enough antibodies in response to the MMR vaccine until age 1, so we cannot give it to babies. It is babies that get measles pneumonia and it is babies that get measles meningitis. The only way to protect this vulnerable population is to vaccinate the community around these babies.

I ask you to move past the current rhetoric surrounding the terrible COVID-19 pandemic that we've all suffered through. I ask you to consider how HB 248 will negatively impact children and families. I ask you to vote NO to HB 248

Thank you for allowing me to comment on HB 248.

Sincerely,

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