

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).

I am Lisa Crosby, DNP, APRN, CNP, PMHS, a practicing Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and a School-Based Health Center. I stand in opposition to HB-248, which opposes the health and well-being of Ohioans, especially children. I have devoted my professional career to caring for children in clinical and community settings, and I continuously strive to pursue better outcomes for all children and their families. HB-248 stands as a threat, to the MANY years of public health efforts, particularly for those who experience health care disparities within our communities. This HB could potentially set our children back in time, which would as well, place many of those I serve at additional risk for increased morbidity and mortality.

HB-248 purports to uphold choice and prevent discrimination. However, this bill could actually discriminate against those who are not eligible for, and/or able to, participate and receive health services. During my career, I have treated children with illnesses which became preventable with vaccinations including those with meningococcal disease, which sadly led to significant morbidity and even worse, death for a few. I have also practiced within school settings for almost 20 years, and witnessed first-hand the chaos that often arises when communicable diseases emerge within the schools. Without knowledge of which children have been previously vaccinated, the health burden for our most precious gems (children with chronic conditions, those who are immunocompromised, or those who have immunocompromised family members) may significantly increase- widening the gap of their health disparities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends routine vaccination to prevent 17 vaccine-preventable diseases for infants, children, adolescents, or adults. There currently is not a mandate that a child must be vaccinated. The mandate is instead that to attend school, a child must be vaccinated- related to an increased potential to spread infection. The US Supreme Court has reaffirmed school vaccinations on multiple occasions. The overall opinion has been, the good of the community supersedes the rights of an individual. States have also established vaccination requirements for children as a condition for child care attendance. It has been repeatedly demonstrated in states with philosophical vaccination exemptions, which have significantly lower rates of vaccination, that there is a higher likelihood of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illnesses.

This bill is depicted as a "freedom bill". Yet there are many laws which restrict our freedoms such as; not texting and driving; requiring use a seat belt; lower speed limits in a school zone, etc. We have those laws because they are necessary to protect the community.

Vaccines and public health measures, such as masking and conscious hand-washing, represent some of the safest and most effective strategies we have at keeping children and communities healthy. Moreover, because of such strategies, we are finally seeing a hopeful end to the COVID-19 pandemic, a blight that has killed nearly 20,000 Ohioans. The science is clear with this, in study after study, which underscore the degree to which benefit outweighs the risk. The opposite is true of this bill. The risks HB-248 could disseminate even more lethal yet preventable disease, morbidity which could be experienced disproportionately by children, and thereby dramatically outweighing any perceived benefits.