

HB 248: To Prohibit Required Vaccination Status
Opponent Testimony: Kelly Engelhart, MPH, BSN, RN
Ohio House Health Committee
June 22, 2021

I appreciate the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 248. I am gravely concerned by this legislation, and I would like to take a few minutes of your time to explain my position.

I am a public health nurse and have been working in local public health in Ohio for more than 25 years, I have spent most of my professional nursing career protecting the health of residents in Ohio through vaccination. Vaccines are a fundamental public health strategy used to protect not only the vaccinated child, but all residents from infectious disease outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics.

I oppose HB248 because the bill is using the legislative process to fight against COVID-19 vaccination, except it applies to **ALL VACCINES**. This bill and most of the proponent testimony has been around COVID Vaccination. If legislators and proponents want to prevent COVID vaccines from becoming mandated by law or allowing Ohio employers, schools etc., to require it, they should propose a bill that addresses COVID-19 Vaccination ONLY.

Vaccination has allowed the United States to eradicate diseases such as smallpox and polio, once deadly and debilitating diseases. Other childhood diseases such as measles, mumps and chickenpox no longer have sustained spread in our schools, daycare centers and communities because required vaccinations for these very contagious diseases provides for a level of immunity that protects everyone, herd immunity.

Vaccination is a primary prevention measure and can also be used when a vaccine preventable disease becomes so widely spread, the way to stop disease transmission is by vaccinating. This strategy is commonly used in the public health profession and was instrumental in stopping measles transmission during a multicounty Ohio outbreak in the Amish community in 2014. Measles was eliminated in the United States in 2000.

Proponents of HB248 argue individual choice to **ALL VACCINES** this threatens the fundamental framework of Ohio's public health system. Public Health policies are driven by morbidity and mortality data, science and evidence-based practices that are proven to improve our states health. Certain diseases and public health threats need a population solution and cannot rely on individual choice when it relates to the health of **ALL** people. Ohio laws already permit refusal of vaccination for medical, religious or philosophical reasons, this questions the real need for HB248? Is the real emphasis of this bill about preventing COVID-19 Vaccination requirements?

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns, and once again, I urge the committee to reject HB 248 to keep Ohioans safe and avoid dangerous consequences for our state.