



June 15th, 2021

Chairman Lipps
Vice Chair Holmes
Ranking Member Russo
Members of the House Health Committee
Reference: Testimony on House Bill 248 (HB-248)

My name is Juan Sanchez Gurmaches, PhD. I am an assistant professor at the Division of Endocrinology at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and at the Department of Pediatrics of the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine.

I stand in opposition to HB-248, a bill that will threaten the health and well-being of Ohioans.

I have devoted my professional life to understand the origin and particular characteristics of adipocytes, the cells of the fat tissue. The continue rise of obesity in children in Ohio, the nation and the world is causing a rise in chronic illness (including type 2 diabetes mellitus and cardiovascular diseases) placing children with obesity in a vulnerable state, more susceptible to a number of infections. The administration of vaccines in these high risk youths have prevented measles, mumps, whooping cough, meningitis, influenza, acute COVID-19, and Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome. Preventing these infectious diseases in youth with obesity has protected them from potential morbidity and mortality.

Vaccines and public health measures like masking represent some of the safest and most effective strategies we have to keep our children and communities healthy. Due to these strategies, children now live to adulthood, free from infectious diseases which previously caused wide spread death. Moreover, in the case of COVID-19, these strategies are bringing the promise of the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, a scourge that has killed nearly 20,000 Ohioans.

The science is clear with study after study underscoring the degree to which benefit of vaccines outweighs the risk. In contrast, HB-248 will result in a greater frequency of preventable diseases and associated morbidity and mortality in youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

Juan Sanchez Gurmaches, PhD
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