



House Bill 248
Opponent Testimony
Ohio House of Representatives, Health Committee
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Chairman Lipps, Vice-Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo and members of the House Health Committee, my name is Lisa Amlung Holloway and I hold the position of Maternal and Infant Health Director for March of Dimes Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition of HB 248.

March of Dimes is a national non-profit organization which brings together scientists, clinicians, parents, members of the business community, and other volunteers and stakeholders in collaboration to improve health outcomes of mothers and babies. Historically, the March of Dimes has been centrally involved in vaccine issues. The March of Dimes began with a mission to prevent polio and funded research that produced vaccines that virtually have eliminate polio epidemics. Over the last few decades, the U.S. has seen an eradication of many vaccine-preventable diseases. This success is largely due to the public's participation in vaccination efforts. However, immunization levels have dropped in various populations in recent decades, and otherwise preventable infectious diseases have made dramatic comebacks. This is attributed to the growing number of people who are "opting-out" of receiving vaccines. A family refusing to vaccinate an individual child places that child at risk and increases the risk of infection for others in the community. Establishing limits on vaccination exemptions is an essential step in ensuring the health of our state's population.

Vaccines are a highly effective means of preventing infectious diseases.

In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has declared vaccines to be one of the top 10 public health achievements of the 20th century. Federal and professional guidelines recommend childhood and adolescent immunizations to protect against a wide range of viral and

bacterial infections – including polio, measles, mumps, and rubella - whose consequences can include permanent disability or even death. ¹

Polio (short for poliomyelitis, once called infantile paralysis), used to strike thousands of children in the U.S. each year. Polio was eradicated in the U.S. by 1979 because of landmark national mass Salk and Sabin vaccination programs. Similarly, the measles vaccine became available in 1963, and in 2000, due to widespread vaccination, the U.S. was declared free of endemic measles. However, in 2019, a U.S. measles outbreak in 31 states, including Ohio, threatened our measles eradication distinction from the World Health Organization. ² Today, the world is facing another preventable infectious virus outbreak, Coronavirus. The world's leading scientists, all levels of government, health care communities, public health officials, town officials and the general public are working together feverishly to distribute a life-saving vaccine and prioritize vaccinating the most vulnerable of our communities to prevent further spread and prevention of the virus.

Exemptions put children at risk from preventable diseases.

Public participation in immunization programs is critical to their effectiveness. To achieve effective protection, otherwise known as **herd or community immunity**, vaccinations must cover a certain percent of the population. This stops the disease from spreading and prevents outbreaks from occurring. The herd immunity threshold for vaccine-preventable diseases depends on how contagious a disease is — the more contagious it is, the higher the threshold to achieve immunity. For most diseases, 70-95% of eligible persons must be vaccinated to attain herd immunity.³ Some people cannot be vaccinated due to allergies, age, or a compromised immune system, but are still protected by herd immunity. Vaccinating a certain percent of the population stops disease transmission even to those who are not vaccinated. Adverse events due to vaccines are extremely rare and are greatly outweighed by the benefits of preventing individual illness, its serious complications, and epidemics.

¹ Institute of Medicine. *Financing Vaccines in the 21st Century: Assuring Access and Availability*. The National Academies Press, 2003. Available at: <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/10782/financing-vaccines-in-the-21st-century-assuring-access-and-availability>

² The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Measles Cases and Outbreaks. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html>

³ Rodrigues CMC, Plotkin SA. Impact of Vaccines; Health, Economic and Social Perspectives. *Front Microbiol.* 2020;11:1526. doi:10.3389/fmicb.2020.01526

When immunization levels have dropped in various populations in recent decades, otherwise preventable infectious diseases have made dramatic comebacks. Measles is usually among the first to reappear when vaccination rates fall; it can cause pneumonia, other serious respiratory infections and encephalitis, the last of which can lead to permanent brain damage or death. According to the CDC, the U.S. experienced a record number of measles cases in 2019, with 1,282 reported cases in 31 states. This is the greatest number of cases since measles eradication was confirmed in the U.S. in 2000. Over 73% of the cases in 2019 were linked to large outbreaks in New York and were among people who had not been vaccinated against measles.⁴ As community immunity weakens, risk of vaccine-preventable diseases to unvaccinated individuals increases. The CDC advises parents to protect their children by keeping their vaccination schedules up to date.⁵ **A family refusing to vaccinate an individual child places the child at risk and increases the risk of infection for others in the community, including those who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons.**

If an unvaccinated child is exposed to infectious diseases, the child's body may not be strong enough to fight the disease. Before vaccines, many children died from diseases that vaccines now prevent, such as whooping cough, measles, and polio. Those same germs still exist today, but because babies are protected by vaccines, we do not see these diseases nearly as often.

March of Dimes urges the committee reject HB 248 and preserve the public health of Ohio so that children, pregnant women, and all Americans are protected from vaccine-preventable diseases. The health and wellbeing of all communities depends on the collective immunity provided by high immunization rates.

For these reasons, March of Dimes OPPOSES this bill and urges the Committee to vote NO on HB 248.

⁴ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Measles Cases and Outbreaks. Available at: www.cdc.gov/measles/casesoutbreaks.html

⁵ Ezeanolue E, Harriman K, Hunter P, Kroger A, Pellegrini C. General Best Practice Guidelines for Immunization. Best Practices Guidance of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/general-recs/index.html>