



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. Nationwide Children's Hospital strongly support immunizations and urge that all children be fully vaccinated. We believe this bill threatens the health of Ohio's children and would create a devastating impact on Ohio's children and families.

I am a general pediatrician. As Chief of the Division of Primary care, I am ultimately responsible for the health of the more than 100,000 children who receive care in our clinics located throughout Columbus. One of the best ways that we can protect the health of children, their families, and the community is through vaccination.

When I first trained to be a pediatrician, the Haemophilus Influenzae B (HiB) vaccine had just been introduced into routine care in the United States. Before the vaccine, more than 20,000 infants and young children would be infected each year, of whom 5% would die and most of the remaining would have irreversible brain damage from meningitis. I witnessed the dramatic decrease in death and disability as my patients were vaccinated. Many pediatricians who have trained since the early 1990s have never had to attend a funeral with a family whose young infant passed away following a HiB infection.

I trained two generations after the pediatricians who began polio vaccination, ending the common summer-time nightmare of death or permanent paralysis. I have never seen a new case of polio because of the high rates of vaccination. Sadly, cases of other vaccine-preventable illnesses occur, like measles and mumps, leaving children dead or with severe disability and opening communities with low protective immune systems to rapid spread.

Quite simply, the best thing that we can do to protect us all is to vaccinate. It is easy to not recognize the tremendous benefit of vaccination because we are stopping cases from ever occurring.

Some families will refuse vaccination. It is my responsibility to make sure that families understand the benefit of vaccination. It is also critical that we know when a family refuses the life-saving opportunity of vaccination. A young infant or child who is not vaccinated has a much greater chance of death from a

vaccine-preventable illness. Without recognizing this risk, we might not begin additional therapy soon enough. In addition, unvaccinated individuals pose risk in our waiting rooms to infants who are too young to be vaccinated. We need to know who is vaccinated to help protect unvaccinated children and every other person exposed to unvaccinated individuals who all potentially have a vaccine-preventable illness. This is central to our mission to ensure the health of all children in our community. We must be able to share this information to act in the best interest of all families.

Vaccines are safe and prevent death and disability. We need to have information about who is not vaccinated to help provide the best care possible to everyone. Limiting our ability to share information only puts our patients at risk. One way that we can stop the spread of illness to others is with masking. Prohibiting masking takes away an important tool in stopping the spread of a wide range of diseases spread through the air from infected individuals. Many of the vaccine-preventable illnesses are spread through respiratory droplets. Prohibiting information sharing about vaccination and masking only serves to put our patients, their families, and the community at greater risk of serious disability or death.

Nationwide Children's believes HB 248 jeopardies the health of Ohio's children now and in the future. We ask you to oppose HB 248.

Thank you for allowing me to comment on HB248.

Alex R. Kemper, MD, MPH, MS  
Professor and Chief, Division of Primary Care Pediatrics  
Nationwide Children's Hospital