

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in opposition to House Bill 248. My name is Benjamin Edward Littlejohn, my pronouns are “they” and “them”, and I am a college student here in Ohio.

If I had known that my tax dollars would fund the payrolls of representatives who are so eager to kill our neighbors under the principles of “freedoms” and antimicrobialism, I may as well expect a firing squad to go down my neighborhood, shooting me and my family in the head along the way. I am greatly concerned for this state’s growing obsession with wanting to cultivate a culture of death and unprotection from biological harms, and we will only be shooting ourselves in the foot if this bill passes.

I consider the definition of “freedom” to be the ability to accept whatever consequences that may occur resulting of your own actions. Pros and cons exist for every decision we make. This is the cornerstone of informed consent, which is a procedure by which you are given reliable medical information--from tried-and-true research methods might I add—and are given a choice as whether a procedure may be beneficial for you. Surgeries, recommended treatments, and vaccines are administered once an individual accepts what they may undergo, should they choose to receive treatment.

In the case of required vaccination, the choice to undergo treatment goes like this: Either you or someone else receives a vaccine or not. If you get a vaccine, you’ll gain protection from diseases and will be able to access facilities like schools and hospitals, who have legitimate reasons to protect themselves against biological threats like disease. If not, you’ll be at risk of catching a disease and will not be able to access certain facilities. The patient being presented this information makes an independent decision based on their lifestyle and needs, and these actions and consequences are put into motion.

This freedom of choice is essential for maintaining the civil liberties that those that support the bill claim to protect. The bill in its nature will, for example, repeal a requirement for college students to be vaccinated against hepatitis B and meningitis before living in the university dorms. Colleges have a reasonable interest to reduce disease because college students often engage in intimate activities like kissing and sex, and the spread of such diseases can impact both the biological and financial healthy of the college body as a whole. In addition,

these diseases can spread outside of the campus should such intimate activities be done with those outside that particular college. (If the person reading this to themselves or aloud may, please refer to or showcase the images attached showcasing symptoms of hepatitis B and meningitis.) Risk reduction measures like requiring vaccination are thus reasonable. The option to live off-campus is still legally protected for those not vaccinated for these diseases, it's just that the student can't reside in the dorms because the college operates them and can thus impose their rules and regulations on their owned property.

This bill also overhauls existing legislation that already allows individuals in Ohio to object to medical treatments for them or their children based on religious and philosophical objections. There is already a process to facilitate this. If parents or guardians were truly concerned about their faith clashing with mandatory vaccination, they would seek out information to opt their child out. In addition, many of the required vaccinations protect against diseases that are imaged included alongside this testimony. This doesn't restrict parent or guardian options to take their children to school or homeschool them, but it does require that parents take certain protective measures before enrolling children into school because even there air and fluids are exchanged between pupils, and there too are people that regularly interact with--and are at risk for--those carrying disease. Thus it's reasonable for schools to require vaccination before enrollment so the institutions may function smoothly and healthy for all involved.

In addition, a business has interest in requiring vaccination for employment because its interest for good operation conflicts with the reality that diseases can occur at random and cripple operations. Restaurants for example deal with a lot of fluid and air exchange, alongside staff having to meet various customers face to face and exchanging air with them. Businesses thus have a choice on whether to take the risk that their operations and the employees that execute them will function perfectly, even in times of terrible biological disease. Therefore, it is reasonable for a business to implement a "no mask, no service" mandate to protect its own self-interests because the space it operates on is privately owned. It would be unnecessary governmental intervention to restrict the freedom of businesses to protect against biological threats. This does not restrict people's choice to take their business elsewhere, but a consequence of not wearing a mask in this situation would be not being able to conduct business, in which this measure to mitigate disease does not infringe on civil liberties.

With these examples and arguments provided, I hope I've made my statement clear enough that this "medical freedom" that the is already enshrined within current processes of public and private space, and that House Bill 248 is completely unnecessary for this. Proponents of this bill are largely organized around being reactionary and ill-informed, and it doesn't help that much of the information they consume has mislead people into thinking that procedures like vaccine requirement and mandate are terrible processes they're forced to endure. I hope that these examples and many other testimonies from my friends in this opposition may present more relevant information as to why a bill like House Bill 248 is not only harmful, but completely pointless in the face of existing legislation. Once again, thank you to Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the House Health Committee to allow me the opportunity to present my testimony.