

June 14, 2021

To: Members of the Ohio House Health Committee
RE: H.B. 248

Dear Franklin County Delegation:

The Franklin County Board of Health was established in October 1919 in response to the Great Influenza, the most devastating flu pandemic on record. We are responsible for protecting the health and well-being of over 475,000 residents in 41 townships, villages, and cities.

In 2019, the Board adopted its current policy framework in which includes a goal to avoid vaccine-preventable deaths and increase vaccination rates. This week, the board of health passed resolution 21-076 authorizing our office to engage with members of the General Assembly regarding HB 248.

We are gravely concerned by HB 248, legislation that places our residents, including children, at risk. This proposal fundamentally changes our current public health system that has been built to quickly respond to and prevent outbreaks of communicable diseases – such as measles, meningitis, tuberculosis, hepatitis, and COVID-19.

Ohio already has some of the most lenient vaccination requirements in the country. Parents and guardians can currently opt out of ANY vaccination for various reasons – medical, religious, philosophical, etc. This bill will go even further prohibiting schools and childcare providers from requesting vaccination records and even prohibits parents from voluntarily submitting these records.

If this bill becomes law, Ohio will surely be faced with more infectious disease outbreaks and no ability to control its spread. For example, measles is a highly infectious, airborne virus which when children who are unvaccinated contract the disease, can lead to hospitalization, developing pneumonia, swelling of the brain and even death. When a child contracts measles it can take up to two weeks before they begin showing symptoms. That means that they can be shedding the virus exposing their peers before becoming symptomatic and testing positive. In the school classroom setting this is problematic if public health officials and school personnel are unable to quickly identify who is unvaccinated and keep them home to make sure that if exposed and later test positive that they do not continue to spread the disease amongst their other unvaccinated peers.

More broadly, this legislation would certainly reduce our vaccination rates and subsequent herd immunity. We encourage members of the committee to explore the [FRED \(A Framework for Reconstructing Epidemiological Dynamics\) Measles Simulator](#). This simulation demonstrates the spread of measles when vaccination rates among school children is only at 80% as compared to 90% and 95% (herd immunity threshold) respectively.

For more information about Franklin County Public Health and our immunization program, please visit our [website](#). Our staff work every day to administer vaccinations to our residents, provide training and technical assistance to healthcare providers while also chairing the Central Ohio Immunization Coalition.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about our concerns regarding H.B. 248. Our infectious disease and immunizations public health professionals are available to provide any addition information that your committee needs while deliberating this critical public health bill.

In Good Health,

Joe Mazzola, MPA
Health Commissioner

CC: Franklin County Board of Commissioners
Attachments: Franklin County Board of Health Resolution 21-076