



**House Bill 248: Vaccinations  
Written Opponent Testimony  
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Presented to the Ohio House Health Committee  
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The Ohio Dermatological Association (ODA) is grateful for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 248. Two years ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) listed vaccine hesitancy as one of the greatest threats to global and public health. We have serious concerns about this proposal causing an inevitable decline in vaccinations statewide. Put simply, when vaccination rates fall, disease rates climb.

The historical impact of vaccine development is clear. Diseases now preventable by vaccination once took the lives of hundreds of thousands of children and babies (as well as many adults) in the U.S. each year. We have vaccines to thank for the near-elimination of the wild polio virus, and the eradication of smallpox, which was incredibly contagious, and fatal in up to 30% of cases. Before the measles vaccine became commonplace, measles itself was, and because it is highly contagious, most people became infected by it, often before the age of 15. In just the decade before the measles vaccine became available, 3 to 4 million Americans were infected each year, and among them thousands were hospitalized, and hundreds died.

Although measles was declared eliminated (no continuous transmission for a period greater than 12 months) in the U.S. in the year 2000, recent small outbreaks of measles (as well as other diseases like pertussis and varicella) have been traced back to pockets of unvaccinated children in states with lower adherence to recommended vaccine schedules. The more people skip vaccinations, the more vulnerable we all become.

The economy is able to grow and thrive worldwide in part due to vaccinations saving billions of dollars annually. Vaccines make traveling for work or leisure safer, and are critical to the reduction of infectious disease risk while engaging in tourism. By promoting health and longevity, vaccination has had significant impact on Americans' physical health, cognitive skills, and school/work performance. Through vaccination, we have increased life expectancies dramatically in the last century. Our investments in vaccination keep people at work and prevent potentially enormous losses in productivity through work absenteeism. As an example, the 1993 Vaccines for Children Act enabled many uninsured or underinsured children to receive their childhood vaccinations. This program in its first 20 years alone saved us an estimated \$295 billion in health care costs, and more than \$1 trillion in societal costs (due to factors such as lives saved and working hours maintained).

We strongly emphasize the harm HB 248 would inflict upon our state and ask that the committee not pass this bill, in order to avoid eroding our progress fighting against the spread of communicable infections. Ohio must preserve the critical immunological safeguards which will help protect our patients and allow them to continue living and working largely free from risk of many life-threatening diseases. Thank you and please feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions about this issue.