



Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee, thank you sincerely for the opportunity to provide testimony on *House Bill 248* (HB-248).

My name is Francis J. Real, MD, MEd. I am a practicing primary care pediatrician at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. I stand in strong opposition to HB-248, a bill that itself has the very high potential to negatively impact the health and well-being of Ohioans especially our children. I have dedicated my professional life to caring for families and am alarmed as HB-248 will have negative repercussions for the health of my patients and families.

During my practice, I have treated patients with illnesses preventable with vaccination (Ex: whooping cough, meningitis). In some cases, these children were too young to receive the protective vaccine or their immune system was too weak for a protective vaccine to be safely administered. Such individuals will be at higher risk for morbidity and mortality due to illnesses that are preventable with current vaccines if the rates of routine childhood vaccination in Ohio decline. This translates to be more illness and death for children in Ohio. Indeed, if HB-248 were to pass, I would need to consider the possibility of relocating to a different state for the safety of my own children.

Vaccines are an incredible tool against disease. Besides clean water, vaccines have been the public health measure responsible for saving the most lives worldwide. This means more children who get to grow up and experience full and healthy lives. HB-248 would no longer allow schools or childcare settings to request vaccination records. This puts children at risk especially those who are young or with chronic medical conditions who may not be fully vaccinated. The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is an example of how vaccine uptake is impacted when it is not assessed by schools. HPV infection causes almost all cervical cancers, 69% of vulvar cancers, 75% of vaginal cancers, 91% of anal cancers, 63% of penile cancers, and 70% of oropharyngeal cancer cases. The currently available HPV vaccine is nearly 100% effective in preventing precancerous lesions that account for 90% of HPV-related cancer cases, estimated to be 33,000 cases annually. Despite its high degree of effectiveness in preventing cancer, only 71% of adolescents have initiated the vaccine and only 54% are up-to-date with the series. If other childhood vaccines were administered at this low a percentage, we would see frequent outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases in our communities.

In conclusion, HB-248 is dangerous for families in Ohio and should not move forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

Francis J. Real, MD, MEd