

**HB 248: To Prohibit Required Vaccination Status**  
**Opponent Testimony: Hendrik Stegall**  
**Ohio House Health Committee**  
**June 15, 2021**

---

I appreciate the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 248. I am deeply concerned by this legislation, which would significantly weaken the public health framework that protects us from harmful, vaccine-preventable diseases. HB 248 does much more than prevent mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations; it would apply to ALL vaccinations, both childhood and adult, except as required for daycare, elementary and high school. This bill would threaten our progress in public health over the past century and would hinder our efforts to fight communicable diseases in the years to come.

Thanks to vaccines, we live in a safer, healthier world than previous generations; vaccines are, without exaggeration, one of the most important medical advancements we have ever made. Vaccines have eliminated diseases which have plagued humanity for most of our known history. HB 248 is troubling because it lays the groundwork for the return of diseases which have largely been eliminated in this country, many of which are even more dangerous than COVID-19. The return of diseases such as chicken pox, measles, and polio, would generate exorbitant, avoidable health care expenses, and more importantly, threaten the lives of our children, our elderly, and vulnerable populations in between.

UNICEF reports an estimated 20 million children's lives worldwide were saved by measles vaccinations between 2000 and 2016. Global polio cases have declined by over 99.9% in just over 30 years due largely to vaccinations. Additionally, a study published earlier this year found that an estimated 69 million lives will be saved by vaccinations against 10 major pathogens between 2000 and 2030.

Vaccines are a direct contributor to economic gains, too. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that for every \$1 spent on childhood vaccination programs, our country saves about \$10.90 in health care costs, and that routine vaccination of children born between 1994 and 2018 has saved our country close to \$406 billion in medical costs and \$1.88 trillion in total society costs. Studies by CDC researchers have found that in a typical flu season, influenza imposes an estimated \$87.1 billion economic burden on the country, and health care facilities requiring flu vaccinations among their employees can reduce patients' risk of contracting influenza or influenza-like illness by 42%.

Through vaccines we not only provide critical protection for infants, young children, and immunocompromised people, but we keep ourselves, our families, and our neighbors safe. Because of vaccines, we live our daily lives free from diseases that once spread through the population unchecked. Vaccines do not take away our freedoms; vaccines *give* us freedom. We cannot risk giving up our freedom from fear, our freedom from disease, by passing HB 248.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns, and once again, I urge the committee to reject HB 248 in order to keep our communities and, indeed, all Ohioans, safe from disease.