

House Bill 248 - Enact Vaccine Choice and Anti-Discrimination Act
Opponent Testimony
Ohio House Health Committee
June 19, 2021

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 Jasmine Tuazon, and I am a fourth-year MD-PhD student at The Ohio State University and a lifetime resident of Ohio.

As part of my medical school longitudinal clinic training, I have worked in an outpatient clinic of Nationwide Children's Hospital and have been highly invested in the health of our community's children. Immunizations play an important role in this goal, and during clinic visits we make sure our patients receive the best care, including providing information about and access to life-saving vaccines. At the same time, we also ensure that patients who wish to decline vaccines feel respected and supported in their medical decisions so they can still trust us with their child's healthcare needs. Proponents of HB 248 want greater vaccination exemption protection in clinic, having claimed that patients are being coerced into vaccination. **However, patients are never forced to get vaccines**, as we respect every patient's personhood and value their informed consent.

Outside of the clinical setting, HB 248 would dramatically expand school and childcare center vaccine exemptions, even though medical and non-medical exemptions are already widely available and advertised. It would also prohibit colleges from requiring vaccines for diseases like HPV, hepatitis B, or meningitis, which are known to spread more rapidly in densely populated, young adult communities and can lead to chronic or fatal disease. Note that exemptions also exist for these at colleges, and many simply recommend these vaccines. **This bill's restrictions are dangerous, as they minimize how protective vaccines are to our community's regular functioning.**

Further, **vaccine rates would drop significantly**, as a verbal vaccine exemption with no documentation enabled by HB 248 would be easier for working parents compared to needing to schedule, arrive at, and pay for their child's vaccine appointments. Because of this, **20+ vaccine-preventable diseases**, including measles, whooping cough, chickenpox, and hepatitis A and B, **will gain traction when vaccination rates fall and will spread widely, threatening our healthcare system's capacity with multiple concurrent epidemics and pandemics.** Further, by progressing with HB 248's restrictions, we limit the freedom of those in our Ohioan families who are immunocompromised, newborns, or elderly to go about our community safely.

Looking at this another way, a review by Pike et al. 2020 states the median cost *per case* in a measles outbreak is \$32,805, whereas the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates the cost of a Measles-Mumps-Rubella vaccine is \$21.71 a dose—**something often paid for outright by private insurance because of how**

impactful and cost-saving the intervention is. If Ohio's healthcare system becomes overwhelmed by these once-controlled diseases, **taxpayers will inherit the burden of upscaling widespread resources for both acute and chronic treatments that could have been prevented through vaccination.**

The magnitude of health benefits, public health safety, and cost savings to society enable everyone to have even greater freedom to pursue their everyday work. The CDC estimates that among children born 1994-2018, childhood vaccines in the United States will prevent an estimated 419 million illnesses, 26.8 million hospitalizations, and 936,000 early deaths over the course of their lifetimes. **By encouraging widespread vaccination, rather than encouraging widespread exemption, the CDC expects childhood vaccines will lead to \$406 billion in direct costs and \$1.9 trillion in total societal costs across the nation – roughly three times Ohio's GDP.**

Immunization has been and will remain a personal choice for everyone, but anti-vaccine activists have continually undercut the societal gains afforded to us through vaccination. It is important your committee knows that both medical consensus and public opinion strongly support immunization in the care for our patients and communities. Further, I cannot emphasize enough the vital responsibility that the Ohio Legislature has in conveying the importance of vaccination and public health to Ohioans and its contribution to our daily freedoms in health and wellness. In light of the realities we face with threats to our society's public health through reduced vaccination, I hope you will oppose this harmful legislation. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jasmine Tuazon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jasmine Tuazon

MD-PhD Student, The Ohio State University
Medical Student Physician Action Network