

June 22, 2021

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the Ohio House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony to House Bill 248.

UC Health's testimony is comprised of two sections: House Bill 248's prohibition on employers requiring employee vaccinations, and UC Health's infectious disease protocols and House Bill 248's detrimental impact on these safety measures.

Prohibition on Vaccination Requirements

House Bill 248's prohibition on hospitals "mandating, requiring, or otherwise requesting an individual to receive a vaccine" (lines 75-80) threatens the safety of our patients and our staff. As the region's only adult academic health system and provider of tertiary/quaternary care, including the region's only adult level 1 trauma center and burn center, as well as one of the few comprehensive stroke centers in southwest Ohio, we care for the most vulnerable patients in our region. To protect these patients and our front line workers, we embrace every opportunity to provide world class health care in a safe environment. This includes requiring employees to be vaccinated against infectious diseases that might otherwise cause serious harm, or even death, to our patients and clinical staff.

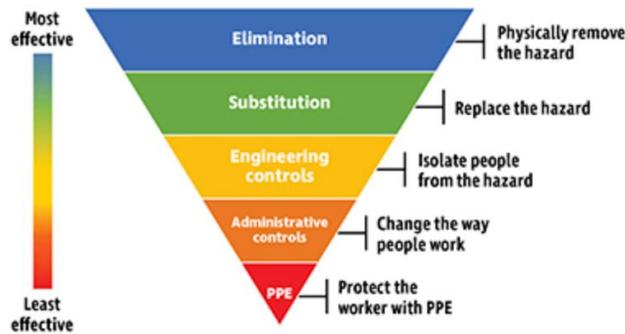
As one of Southwest Ohio's largest employers with the purpose to *Advance Healing and Reduce Suffering*, it is critically important that we have the ability to implement safety protocols, including vaccinations, to prevent the spread of infectious diseases when caring for our highly vulnerable patients. House Bill 248 will endanger the lives of UC Health's patients, their families, and our 12,000 team members.

UC Health Infectious Disease Protocols

UC Health follows the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Hierarchy of Controls and OSHA Hierarchy of Controls addressing infectious diseases¹. These controls establish steps an employer must take to assess hazards to ensure the safety of the employees. As the graphic illustrates, elimination of the hazard is the most effective control, which incorporates vaccinations of employees. Engineering and administrative controls follow the elimination of the hazard, and lastly, PPE is utilized in every possible manner to reduce the spread of infectious diseases.

¹ <https://www.assp.org/news-and-articles/how-to-apply-the-hierarchy-of-controls-in-a-pandemic>

NIOSH HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS



To help ensure the health and safety of our patients, their families and our team members, we require UC Health staff to receive designated vaccinations while still allowing for medical and religious exemptions when appropriate. These vaccines include prevention against:

Measles: Complications from measles can include pneumonia (which can lead to death) and several debilitating neurologic problems. Pregnant women and immunocompromised patients, , those receiving chemotherapy, and those receiving certain medications that impair the immune system are uniquely susceptible to these complications.

Mumps: Complications of mumps include neurologic problems, like deafness. When orchitis is seen with this disease, it can lead to decreased fertility and possibly testicular cancer in males.

Rubella: Although rare, panencephalitis, an infection of the brain can happen in those infected with rubella and is usually devastating. Babies born to infected mothers may have permanent hearing loss, eye and heart abnormalities.

Varicella: This infection, commonly known as Chicken pox, can cause a serious or deadly pneumonia in adults. In immunocompromised and pregnant women, varicella can cause a disseminated infection that leads to serious complications that can include the baby suffering brain, eye, limb and GI abnormalities. If a neonate acquires varicella they can also become seriously ill or die.

Influenza: The primary complication of influenza is pneumonia which has both short and long term effects on breathing. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that, “between 70 percent and 85 percent of seasonal flu-related deaths have occurred in people 65 years and older, and between 50 percent and 70 percent of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations have occurred among people in this age group”².

² <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/65over.htm>

We also offer the Hepatitis B vaccination series for patient-facing employees who have potential for bloodborne exposure. Employees can choose to receive or decline this vaccination, but offering the vaccination is an OSHA requirement.

All of these illnesses pose an immediate and serious health threat to our patients, their families and our team members. House Bill 248 will prohibit us from taking necessary steps to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in our health care settings.

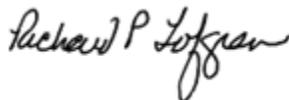
Conclusion

Backed by the academic strength of the University of Cincinnati, one of the nation's top 25 public research universities, UC Health revolutionizes how discovery-driven care is delivered. Since the 1940's our clinical leaders have been dedicated to the search for new information about health, diseases, medicine and treatments, including our own Dr. Albert Sabin who developed the first live, attenuated polio vaccine effectively eradicating polio from the world³.

UC Health strongly believes in the efficacy, safety and necessity of vaccines. Not only does House Bill 248 weaken our current public health framework, it undermines decades of advancements in research and discoveries eradicating deadly diseases.

We respectfully request the Ohio House Health Committee not support House Bill 248. Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can answer any questions related to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Richard P. Lofgren, M.D., M.P.H.
President and Chief Executive Officer



Evaline Alessandrini, M.D.
Executive Vice President, Chief Medical Officer & Interim Chief Operating Officer

³ <https://med.uc.edu/about/history>