

Written Testimony: Proponent HB248

I am a current Emergency Department RN. I have been with my hospital for a little shy of seven years and have been a nurse for ten years. I have worked throughout this pandemic before a vaccine was available and have also been working since it has become available. To be clear, I am not against vaccines. In fact, I have been fully vaccinated including a yearly flu shot since before becoming a nurse. Doing so in many cases without the need for a mandate. Regarding this particular vaccine, I have had reservations since the beginning of development. Traditionally vaccines have taken years to go through proper trials. Results of the trials, side effects, and efficacy have historically been readily available to the public. However, with this vaccine finding transparent data both in support of and against this vaccine is most difficult. In the few short months since this vaccine has become available, we are seeing glimpses of these side effects and the efficacy rate is continuing to decline. This is not an unfounded result of a vaccine, and I am not saying that there are not benefits to the vaccine whatsoever. However, these are all factors that healthcare providers such as myself as well as general everyday Ohioans have concerns about.

I have now officially been told per my hospital system that I have until December to get this vaccine. If I do not get this vaccine I will be subjected to weekly testing and wearing a mask at all times despite the status of mask mandates within the healthcare system. To be clear, this means that between now and the end of November I will continue to work just as I have since the pandemic began. Beginning in December, I will undergo weekly testing not because I am ill with COVID but because I did not comply with the mandates put into place by my employer "in the name of science" Additionally, after the mask mandates are removed from the healthcare system, I will have to continue wearing one as a Scarlet Letter for my non-compliance. It will be a short matter of time before patient's catch on to what my mask represents which will ultimately subject me to even higher risk of patient violence than I already face in my current role.

Now let's think about this for a moment; recent CDC data is reporting that this vaccine does not prevent currently vaccinated individuals from getting or transmitting COVID. So, because I am not vaccinated, I will be subjected to repeated and un-necessary testing simply because I am not vaccinated while someone who is vaccinated and is able to transmit the virus, the same as me, will not be doing so simply because they chose to comply. This is not science. This is punishment. We are giving employers the right to mark, punish, and threaten the livelihoods of millions of citizens based upon the political nature in which this vaccine and virus has been delivered. My profession specifically is at great risk as we are already facing growing staffing shortages.

As healthcare providers we are taught autonomy. Per the American Nurses Association this is defined as "individuals have the right to self-determination, that is, to make decisions about their lives without interference from others" yet we are denying those who uphold this ethical standard the same consideration. No one person is the same. It is not up to any employer or establishment to force treatment upon someone who does not want it. As legislators it is your obligation to deny such a precedence to be set. In healthcare prior to providing treatment, we are required to obtain informed consent. This outlines the risks and the benefits of the procedure to be performed. This is explained in detail and once this has been given, each person then decides whether to move forward with the treatment. If the risk is too great for the patient in their personal opinion or situation, we don't force this treatment. Why is this vaccine any different? At this point, people are aware of the benefits of this

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vaccine as well as the risks that we face in not taking it. To force this goes against every moral and ethical principle that I as a healthcare provider and you as a legislator vowed to uphold. I thank you for your time and strongly urge a vote of YES on HB248.

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