

Dear Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Health Committee members,

Thank you for calling this special session for reconsideration of Ohio H.B. 248, as it is an incredibly important bill with profound implications. As a nurse, I completely support and encourage vaccinations. I do not, however, believe they should be mandated. Informed consent is at the heart of healthcare, and vaccine mandates (both from public and private entities) inherently takes away informed consent. I believe COVID-19 vaccinations are a medical miracle for the elderly and those at-risk for poor outcomes from contracting COVID-19. I do not, however, believe the government or private businesses should have the ability to require them for employees or consumers.

Like many other Ohioans, I have been recently mandated by my employer to take the COVID-19 vaccinations while they are still under Emergency Use Authorization. The consequence of not submitting proof of full immunization by October 1, 2021 is termination. This means that employees must decide by September 8 in order to complete the vaccine series by the October first deadline. I have personally witnessed several adverse reactions from these vaccinations in friends and family members. It is not a surprise that many healthcare workers are hesitant based on their firsthand experiences. I have both medical and religious concerns regarding the currently available COVID-19 vaccines and will be submitting exemption requests to my employer. My understanding, however, is that these exemptions are incredibly difficult to obtain. According to the CDC, the only approved medical exemption is allergy to the product. Furthermore, as of August 10, 2021, my employer has still not provided a medical nor religious exemption process for employees.

Healthcare systems are comparing these new COVID-19 vaccines to previously required vaccines such as the MMR or Influenza vaccines. These are not fair comparisons, however, as the previously-required vaccines had been studied for much longer periods of time before becoming conditions of employment, and have much milder adverse effect profiles. A few hours of comparing the government-managed VAERS reports between these vaccines will paint very different pictures.

Any medical intervention has the potential for unexpected adverse events. Science is never final and always has the potential to evolve. Considering this, individual Ohioans should be able to weigh the risks and benefits of a vaccine according to their own personal health circumstances. Therefore, I urge you to please support H.B. 248 with an emergency clause to protect Ohio's healthcare workers.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important bill.

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