

Testimony of Daniella Castillo, RN BSN
Support HB248
Health Committee
Aug 14, 2021

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and honorable members of the House Health Committee:

First, I would like to thank you for considering my proponent testimony on sub HB 248, which will offer a broad protection to Ohio citizens regarding mandated vaccines and discrimination involving vaccine passports.

My name is Daniella Castillo. I am clinical nurse at a local Dayton hospital, and I have been practicing in the state of Ohio since 2006. Apart from being a nurse I am a mother of four children, two of which serve in our United States Military.

When I began practicing as a nurse in 2006, I was not required to be vaccinated against influenza every year at the hospital where I was employed. I had never received the influenza vaccine before it became mandatory for us in 2013. Overall, I had been in excellent health and made the decision based on my personal health status that I did not need it. In 2013 when it was made mandatory, I was not happy about the decision but reluctantly decided to get it in order to keep my job. I researched and learned that the influenza vaccine had been around since 1945 which helped me feel slightly better about taking it. Apart from that, I was completing my bachelor's degree of nursing, while working nights and raising my four children and could not afford to be unemployed.

My employer offered "exemptions," but they required multiple steps, including lengthy personal statements and notarized documents. Many exemptions were denied. I realize that Medicare requires a certain percentage of hospital workers to be vaccinated for a payout. Unfortunately, this policy was yet another created in the name of health for hospitals to maximize profit.

As a clinical nurse working in an acute care setting, I have had the unique perspective of actually taking care of many patients who have been vaccine injured. I have heard their stories and seen their suffering. I also have witnessed many staff and colleagues actually become ill from Influenza A & B despite their yearly mandated vaccine.

I ask you, where are our rights as healthcare workers? Who will be responsible for our injuries? What will happen when we become ill or injured, who will pay our medical bills, support our families? Is there any liability for the employer who mandates vaccines? Unfortunately, the employer that mandates a medical intervention is not held liable for any adverse reaction to the intervention. Likewise, vaccine manufacturers are not held liable for injuries arising from a vaccine injury or death. If I am mandated to receive a vaccine I do not want or feel I need should there not be recourse if I am injured because of it?

As a nurse, I feel strongly that where there is risk there should be a choice. I care for patients every day and I am passionate about their care and advocating for them and their choices. Informed consent is one of the most important foundations of ethical healthcare. Informed consent requires a discussion regarding the nature of the intervention, risks versus benefits, reasonable alternatives and assessment of the patient's understanding of all these elements. There are times where patients decide against an intervention proposed by a physician. In these cases, we do not bully or treat our patients any differently because they chose something different for themselves. Our jobs are to help guide and support them in their decision. Accepting a medical intervention should never be a result of coercion or bullying and absolutely should not be a condition of employment or a condition to participate in society.

As with any medical intervention, there are always potential risks. Vaccines are not without risks. While many people choose interventions and suffer no ill effects, there will always be those that are not so lucky. Some may experience mild effects while others may suffer devastating injury or possibly death because medicine is not a one size fits all solution. Unfortunately, vaccines carry significant risk especially those that don't have years of significant human research. This is a fact that cannot be denied and is significantly underrated as well as underreported.

I encourage you to review the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) created to provide a place for those injured by vaccines to report their event. There is an alarming increase in reports. The number of adverse reactions being reported to VAERS for the new COVID-19 vaccines are frightening. We cannot be forced to take this risk in hopes of keeping our jobs. How is it that I have over six years of college education under my belt, an additional fifteen years of experience making life saving decisions on a daily basis to keep my patients from harm- yet I am denied the right to make a health decision for my own body? Again, where there is risk there MUST be a choice.

As our legislators, it is your duty to listen to your citizens and help to protect them from discriminatory practices. If I am forced to receive the COVID vaccine, I will have no choice but to walk away from a 15 year career as a nurse and caregiver, a career I am passionate about and absolutely love. It has been my absolute joy to help provide comfort and care to many ill and elderly patients in my community.

Please understand that many Ohioans are very concerned about the potentially dangerous path we are headed down. We are afraid that we will no longer be able to actively participate in our own society for the simple ability to choose what goes in our bodies. This bill will serve to help protect the choice of the people, to choose what pharmaceuticals to consume or what medical interventions to receive without worry of potential discrimination.

I offer my heartfelt gratitude for your time and consideration in hearing the concern of this nurse and mother. Please vote YES on sub HB 248.

Daniella Castillo, RN BSN

