

August 12, 2021

Erin Welker
5840 Prior Road
Nashport, Ohio 43830

To: Chairman Lipps, Vice-Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee

I am a public school employee and the mother of a current nursing student at Ohio University – Zanesville. My daughter, Laine, currently works at Genesis Hospital in Zanesville as a multi-skilled technician. When she was eight years old she told me that she wanted to be a nurse, five years later her brother, my son, Ben, was diagnosed with Ewings Sarcoma. We spent countless hours, days, and weeks at Children’s Hospital over a twenty two month span before Ben’s battle came to a close and he passed away from sarcoma. If Laine wasn’t in school she was with us at Children’s and it intensified her passion to become a nurse. She took a job this past December at Genesis Hospital to work as an MST in preparation for a career in nursing. I encouraged her to take this job to see if, once she was in the hospital setting, she would still have the drive to follow her chosen career path. I must tell you that it continued to reinforce her decision to become a nurse, even though the job she is currently doing is not one that most of us would eagerly sign-up for. Bodily fluids, changing linens, finger sticks, blood pressures, and protecting oneself from combative patients is a calling for someone with a passion for people, especially since the pay is higher at Taco Bell than it is at the hospital but I digress. Laine had a Zoom orientation three days ago in preparation for starting into the “official” nursing program in two weeks. It’s now that I should mention that Laine has not taken the Covid shot and has no plans to take the shot, it’s a deal breaker. One of the professor’s doing the orientation mentioned that if the students have not taken the shot, they should plan on doing it immediately or else risk not being able to participate in clinicals, therefore, not being able to receive the necessary instruction to graduate. My nineteen year old daughter is now ready to change her major based on that statement. The kid that has spent the majority of her life planning and preparing for a nursing career is now thinking of becoming an engineer. I talked her off the ledge that day but subsequent conversations over the past three days have led me to advise her to reevaluate her career path the first of November. I told her many of us are hoping that HB 248 would pass in this state which would allow her to continue in her chosen field.

I’m a big picture kind of girl so I’m not looking at HB 248 through the lens of my child; I’m looking at it on a much larger scale for each and every one of us. If a portion of the nursing students in Laine’s class have the same feelings that she has and they leave the program, multiply that by all of the nursing schools in the state of Ohio, insert the current nursing shortage, and we are left with a much larger shortage in a few years. We’re removing passionate kids from a program and a profession. We will see the effects of that decision when we’re on the receiving end, in a hospital somewhere just hoping we have a nurse that is taking care of us because they have a passion for their job and they’re not punching a time clock. We see those employees everywhere we go; restaurants, businesses, technicians, state representatives, anyone can tell the difference between clock punchers and job lovers. Healthcare is where the rubber meets the road and it’s common ground for all of us. We will all need it at some point and we’re all vulnerable when we need it. Personally, I want someone like Laine caring for me instead

of Nurse Ratchet that believes she knows what's best for me, she's working her third double shift this week because the hospital's short staffed, and her paycheck is large but her temper is short.

Ironically, I was in Home Depot last week at the self-checkout when I heard two young girls (that worked there) talking about how they didn't want the shot. They were wearing masks because, obviously, businesses have to identify employees that are free thinkers and haven't yet complied. After I checked out, I walked over to them and told them to not let their employer or anyone else bully them into doing something that they didn't want to do. One of the girls said, "I don't want to take it but I'm in nursing school and they're pushing me to get it." I told her my daughter was starting nursing school, she wasn't getting the shot, and she'd been kicking around the idea of changing her major if it was mandated. She said, "I'm thinking of changing my major, too." There you have it. I'm fifty five years old, healthy, and cringing over what the future holds for us as we age and are in need of medical care.

Another irony, as I write this, my husband just came upstairs (he's still working from home) and told me his employer is advising their employees will need the Covid shot by the first of the year. Good luck keeping your utilities on. Who needs lights and power anyway?

This is the hill I'm prepared to die on so if it means I forage for food in my woods because I can't shop or participate in commerce then so be it. If we lose our jobs then we'll just collect welfare, until they mandate the jab, like everyone else. You've been elected to represent the people of your districts, I respectfully request that you consider what I've said and to think about your future, as well as the future of your constituents.

I will leave you with a final thought. One of my favorite scriptures from the Bible is one that I think applies directly to HB 248 and all of us advocating for medical freedom. It's for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. - Galatians 5:1.

Respectfully,

Erin Welker