

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

I am a CPA in Ohio, currently working for a social service organization in the finance department. Given the funding nature of my current employer, the pressure to take the current COVID vaccine is accelerating among all staff. The pressure is not from the agency itself, who to their credit has been navigating the issue to the best of their ability. The vaccine is not currently mandated for my position, but I have seen the writing on the wall for the nurses and social workers who meet with our consumers in their homes as at least one funding source has chosen a mandated vaccine path. A vaccine mandate is coming for the others as well, and for my department soon after.

I've already overheard comments at work demeaning those who chose not to take the EUA vaccine. How much more will the climate there deteriorate once it is clear who is vaccinated and those who are not? I have no reason to believe that my vaccination status will continue to be confidential into the future months. Conversations with a few of the other staff reveal their own fears regarding the culture that may result from the progression toward mandated vaccines. The company culture is certain to be damaged, as individuals choose to leave or wait with anxious anticipation to be treated as second class citizens and eventually released. Again, because funding is forcing the course with the agency.

I have no doubt that left unchecked, individuals in Ohio will face difficult decisions regarding their personal medical choice and ability to make a living.

The risks associated with any medical choice are personal risks. Therefore, it should remain a personal medical choice, to be made without the outside influence of businesses, employers, and government. And those decisions should not be allowed to be the basis of bullying, discrimination, and segregation. The atmosphere of fear, stoked by some of Ohio's leaders, has provided a perfect opportunity to assign blame to an individual for what results from a virus. It is time to protect all the citizens of Ohio from this situation, which is certain to only escalate across all of Ohio, within all fields.

Thank you,
Jenette Yocom