

Good Morning,

My name is Jennifer Geers. I am currently a Level III Newborn Intensive Care Unit nurse at a hospital in Cincinnati. In 1991, I received my Master of Health Administration from Xavier University in Cincinnati. In 2019, I received my license as a registered nurse in both Ohio and Indiana. I have worked in healthcare all my life at various hospitals in Cincinnati and Columbus, OH, first in various administrative roles and now as a nurse to the tiniest of warriors in the NICU.

I wish to thank this committee for the opportunity to testify on HB 248 today. I am here to respectfully request that you amend HB 248 with an emergency clause so those facing vaccine mandates or loss of employment will have immediate relief. I am also asking you to vote YES to an amended Vaccine Choice and Anti-Discrimination Act, without delay.

My reasons are as follows:

1. Without HB 248, society and healthcare institutions continue a slippery slope. What will be next? Will we be checking the vaccine status of our heart attack victims before we begin chest compressions or the woman in labor before we will grant her the privilege of delivering her child? Will insurance companies only cover the services of those that meet certain vaccine requirements? Will premiums be higher for those without certain vaccines? It seems unreal doesn't it? This would never happen in our benevolent country in an industry founded by nurses who only wanted to provide care for those who couldn't afford a private physician, right?
2. I am old enough to remember when "patient dumping" was a problem. This was when hospitals would refuse to care for or would transfer a patient based solely on that patient's ability to pay. If the patient was indigent, on Medicaid or Medicare, he or she would be out the door, literally to the street or transferred to a public hospital so that hospital would bear the expense. Shamefully, we had to hold the hospitals' feet to the fire with the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act of 1986, requiring hospitals to treat all emergency cases and making it illegal for hospitals to inquire about insurance status. I view HB 248 with the same level of importance.
3. This last 18 months has been very hard on everyone. We have all had to make tough decisions. I'm certain everyone here has a "what COVID cost me" story. However, it is my belief that we, as a society, can use these moments to restrict our God-given rights to freedom, bodily autonomy, and healthcare privacy out of fear OR to reaffirm them with legislation such as the one under consideration today.

As a nurse, I ascribe to the ethics of a patient's right to choose or deny treatment, patient privacy, veracity, and ethical and equal treatment. This is the foundation of my life everyday in my place of work. I am sad that HB 248 needs to exist but am grateful for the wisdom of the State of Ohio and of this committee to foresee its need.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration today. I am asking you to vote YES on HB 248 without delay and bring immediate relief to all Ohioans.