



Ohio House Health Committee

House Bill 248
August 24, 2021

Chairman Lipps, ranking member Russo, and members of the House Health Committee. My name is Joe Mazzola. I am the Health Commissioner at Franklin County Public Health and currently serve as President of the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners. On behalf of AOHC, we respectfully offer this testimony in strong opposition to House Bill 248, which proposes dramatic and sweeping changes in vaccination policy for Ohio.

AOHC is the state association representing Ohio's 113 local health departments. Part of the mission of AOHC is advocating for an effective and efficient local governmental public health system. It's the view of AOHC that this legislation would fundamentally weaken our public health system while needlessly placing the health and welfare of millions of Ohioans in jeopardy.

Vaccinations are truly one of public health's greatest success stories. We often take the success of vaccinations for granted as we all benefit from their protection every single day. Because of vaccines, we live our daily lives largely safe from many diseases that once spread through the population unchecked. Specifically, there are 14 diseases, you almost forgot about thanks to vaccines¹: such as **Polio, Tetanus**, Influenza, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis A, Rubella, Hib, **Measles, Whooping Cough** (Pertussis), Pneumococcal Disease, Rotavirus, Mumps, Chickenpox, Diphtheria...and now of course from COVID-19.

Vaccines not only protect you, they protect people you may never meet. We all need vaccines throughout our lives to help protect against serious diseases. When we have lower vaccination rates, outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases can and do still happen in communities across our state and country. It's important to remember CDC and FDA take many steps to make sure vaccines are very safe. So vaccinations protect our kids, the

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/diseases/forgot-14-diseases.html>

unborn, those who are immunocompromised and adults as they age. Ultimately it's about prevention. Without vaccines, we are putting ourselves at risk for getting seriously ill and suffering preventable pain, disability, and even death.

Respectfully, as noted in the recent *Columbus Dispatch* editorial, we need not only to oppose H.B. 248 but also put in place the policies that truly will protect public health. We hope to work with the Ohio House Health Committee to develop strong policies that strengthens our public health system and improves public health. This "you're on your own" philosophy of H.B. 248 is, in our view, not the type of public policy that's needed- especially during a pandemic. We should be able to rely on government regarding vaccinations similar to how we readily accept it when it comes to other public health issues such as food safety, clean water and seat belts. Prohibiting our schools, community and business leaders from requiring vaccination will only make COVID-19 and the burden from all vaccine preventable diseases worse.

We appreciate the many views which have been shared with the committee. And AOHC is always open to hearing opinions about how we can improve our vaccination rates in Ohio. But we join Ohio's medical and business communities and offer our strong opposition to H.B. 248 based on the best available science and public health practice. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.