

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chairman Holmes, and Ranking Member Russo, I would like to submit written testimony in favor of HB248. My witness testimony slip is attached; I understand there is an emergency hearing for this in the house health committee on August 24, 2021, my written testimony is as follows:

I am currently employed in the Columbus area, where I have worked for the last 16 years as a Registered Respiratory Therapist. I am speaking on my own behalf, not that of my employer.

As a licensed and multi-credentialed healthcare provider, I believe in freedom of choice. I believe in patient advocacy. I believe in treating the individual. Unfortunately, I've not seen much of that since the COVID-19 pandemic began. What I have seen is abuse of power, twisting of data, broken promises and a dangling carrot that is constantly moving out of the reach of Ohioans and the American people.

As a healthcare provider, often my patients make choices that I don't agree with - for example: smoking while on oxygen, a decision that has the potential to impact more than just the patient. From an ethical standpoint, you'll very rarely find a doctor that would discontinue oxygen from such a patient, because the patient still **needs** oxygen and failing to provide it could violate the oath the physician took to "do no harm." Most patients who smoke and have been prescribed oxygen take care to do it as "safely" as possible: they take the oxygen off, turn the oxygen off, and leave the room so as to minimize the risk. As a Respiratory Therapist, I do my best to assess the **individual** patient's risk level, advise the patient of their risk level, and I tailor my education and smoking cessation offer around the **individual** and their specific risk factors. In addition to these things, there are other things that are done to help mitigate risk: I provide thermal fuses to be placed in line with the oxygen; in the event of a fire, the thermal fuse is designed to prevent a fire from reaching the supply source, thereby minimizing the size of the fire, thereby reducing the rate at which the fire spreads and can buy valuable time to evacuate the scene. I might also limit the number of oxygen tanks that can be provided to the patient *at a time*. Every patient is given a "No Smoking - Oxygen in Use" sign to serve as a reminder to the patient and anyone around them. I honor my patients' decisions, and I provide the same standard and quality of care without passing judgment, cutting corners, or penalizing the patient. I'm asking my employer to do the same for me and I'm asking the health committee to demand this of all employers in Ohio to protect those who may not be able to speak for themselves.

The problem I have with vaccine mandates is where do we draw the line? We already see as common, every day practice, pediatricians who kick families out of the practice for failing to comply with the vaccination schedule. The same healthcare providers who were "heros" in 2020 because they showed up, often times with a SINGULAR mask that had to be re-used because there was insufficient PPE, when **there was no vaccine for anybody** are now being coerced and threatened with termination for failing to get this vaccination. Nationwide Children's Hospital is asking highly invasive questions, such as asking employees who are requesting a temporary medical exemption due to pregnancy to disclose the date of sexual intercourse which resulted in pregnancy. They are also being asked to disclose intent to breastfeed as well as current breastfeeding status. This is invasive and wrong. OhioHealth is mandating weekly COVID testing for staff who fail to receive the vaccine. I find this interesting, as when there was no vaccine, staff weren't required to be tested, even when a COVID exposure occurred! Where's

the line? Healthcare mandates strip away individualized healthcare and destroy the patient/physician relationship.

In case a reminder is needed - in 2020 respiratory therapists were thrust into the limelight as the world grappled with how to ensure they had enough ventilators to handle the surging loads, and even if enough ventilators were secured, would they have enough respiratory therapists to operate them. In Ohio, we "shut down" to "slow the spread" for this reason ... which is why these threats of termination for failing to comply with this vaccine mandate are particularly interesting to me: if we were short staffed before the pandemic and as the pandemic continues to play out, why would any healthcare organization risk losing valuable staff over a vaccine that was never designed to stop the spread? What's going to happen when we all call their bluff?

My employer is mandating the COVID-19 vaccine. Where there is risk, there must be a choice. Some may argue that I have a choice. Let me be clear - I understand that these "mandates" do not mean someone is going to come to my home, hold me down and forcibly inject me with the COVID-19 vaccine. With that being said, I have read with my own two eyes that my only "choices" are: 1. accept a vaccination that I do not want and have philosophical, medical and religious concerns about or 2. surrender my career, my passion, my livelihood, a huge part of my identity, as well as my source of income, and my ability to hold health insurance 3. walk around wearing "proof" that I am unvaccinated by being required to wear a mask and risk discrimination because of it. You can see, there is risk but there really isn't a choice!

If you watch what has played out in California, New York and Maine over the last several years regarding vaccine mandates, you will understand my concerns. There are physicians who acknowledge some of their patients shouldn't get a vaccine yet are unwilling to write a medical exemption due to the fact that the medical board keeps track of which doctors write exemptions, and if a doctor happens to write what the board finds to be "too many", the doctor can be penalized!

My body was wonderfully created by my Creator, and I was born with the God-given freedom to make choices for my own body. Forced, mandated, coerced vaccinations are not only unethical, they are un-American, anti-Ohioan, and go against many of the values the medical community is supposed to stand for!

The healthcare industry needs this bill to pass to protect our healthcare workers and to prevent an even larger mass exodus from the many disciplines in the healthcare field, not just bedside nurses, doctors and respiratory therapists!

As every hospital in the Columbus area has already mandated this vaccination, we also need an emergency clause amendment so that those of us facing mandates now can have immediate relief! Remember, this is a liability free vaccine.

I'm counting on you for support! VOTE YES ON HB 248!