

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the House Health Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to provide my written-only testimony for supporting House Bill 248.

My name is Laura Wood and I am a registered respiratory therapist with over a decade of experience. I was part of the team that hit the ground running when Covid-19 first presented itself in our community early March 2020. I am part of a team that has faced this head on for 17 months straight. I am an advocate for patients and their rights in regard to healthcare and medical decisions. I am dedicated to giving excellent and professional care without discrimination. The level of care I provide does not depend on patient's personal or health related decisions.

I wish to advocate for myself. I have made a choice not to receive the Covid-19 vaccine at this time. Though I am a healthcare provider/employee, I am also a patient when making vaccine/healthcare decisions that impact myself. As a patient, I deserve the same right, freedom of choice, and not be discriminated against. Being a healthcare provider should not strip me of those rights.

If facilities continue to mandate the Covid-19 vaccine, patients will suffer. The remaining staff, which was already stretched thin during this pandemic response, will be forced to cover more shifts as folks like myself are forced out of the employment pool. If forced to undergo unsolicited medical procedures, more exceptional healthcare providers will opt out of the healthcare field. There will be an overwhelming number of proficient and compassionate health care providers with a calling for caring for others not providing that care for the sick because they wish to have autonomy of making their own healthcare decisions.

Said more plainly, only a few months ago we 'front line' workers were called heroes. I have seen firsthand the effects of Covid-19 both on patients and their families. It is not from a position of ignorance that I speak, rather from a position of firsthand experience and education. I, and I alone, am uniquely qualified to make my own healthcare decisions. Please see to it that our state legislature codifies into law my right to freedom of choice in this matter.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to provide testimony on the need and urgency of House Bill 248.

Sincerely,
Laura Wood RRT/RCP