

Testimony of Lyndsey Ritze, PA-C
Support HB 248
Health Committee
August 9, 2021

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and honorable members of the House Health Committee,

I have previously submitted testimony on this bill with references and would ask you to please refer back to that testimony as well.

I'm sure you have heard many hospital and healthcare systems throughout the state have now announced mandatory COVID-19 vaccines for all staff. As a healthcare worker I am writing to implore you to please bring HB 248 to a vote. We must pass this bill, with an emergency clause to enact it immediately, or a large portion of our healthcare workforce will be facing unemployment.

While we were considered heroes last year in the face of a pandemic, without proper PPE, and without vaccines, we are now not afforded the same rights and respect we give our patients, of informed consent with the ability to DECLINE a medical intervention we do not wish to pursue for ourselves. Every patient is offered an explanation of risks and benefits, and the choice to proceed with a recommended treatment or not. We do not treat patients differently when they decline interventions that are offered. As a medical provider, this is my duty every single day toward patients.

In the past several months since the vaccines have been available to the public, I have PERSONALLY treated many patients who have had vaccine adverse reactions. I place intravenous catheters which can be used for plasmapheresis, which is a long-term and frequently minimally successful treatment for the autoimmune attack that can happen when some people receive a vaccine. There is *no way* to know who will suffer a severe reaction, including death. We should **never** be **forced** to take that risk unless it is our own personal **choice**.

I graduated from PA school in 2010. Mandatory influenza vaccines were not yet part of the deal. This happened in 2013 when Medicare enacted a reporting system for hospitals to receive more reimbursement if a certain percentage of staff is vaccinated. This is not about health. This has never been about health. This is about money and the hospitals wanting as much of it as they can get, and to top it off, it is my own tax dollars going right back into their pockets. I would never have chosen a career in public service as a healthcare provider if I knew that this would be a requirement and that my own medical autonomy is no longer my own, that I am giving my body up to my employer. The employer is not going to pay the medical bills for the adverse reactions that are happening. The pharmaceutical companies are not going to be liable either. How can we not see that none of this is okay? I now, as a single mother, must give up my career? Not to mention how short-staffed the hospitals already are, and how much worse off everyone will be in the dead of winter when all the staff is forced to "voluntarily resign." And we know that the state will never approve our unemployment claims.

Millions of people chose to take the extra unemployment money for the past year instead of finding work, while the HEALTHCARE HEROES laid their lives on the line voluntarily every single day. Now we will lose entire lifetimes of education and careers, without any compensation or unemployment. What a slap in the face.

THIS MUST STOP NOW.

It is YOUR duty to protect the citizens of this state. You cannot allow mandates of a product that has even the slightest potential to harm. We have been begging for legislation for this for healthcare workers and the influenza vaccine for years to no avail!

With respect,
Lyndsey Ritze, PA-C