

August 16, 2021

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 248.

I am a nurse, wife, mom, grandmother and legal guardian for my mother in law who has dementia. I am no stranger to care taking of others as well as myself. As this COVID vaccine mandate has been proposed for healthcare workers at my facility and other institutions in Ohio, I find myself questioning my career choices. It is my opinion that mandating a vaccine or disclosing ones vaccine status is unethical, illegal, and medically harmful to us as Americans.

First, with regard to ethics, such mandates violate ones principle of individual autonomy, informed consent and non-maleficence. As a nurse, that is what I advocate for daily for my patients and daily for my Mother in Law, as her Legal Guardian. In both roles I have made a promise to always act in their best interest, to never act in a way that would cause harm and to always ensure they maintain autonomy over body so long as they have sound mind. Mandates are coercive and have the potential to cause harm. Denying one of that right to choose is unethical.

I also feel that mandating a vaccine that is not out of a trial phase, without informed consent that could potentially be medically harmful is coercion and illegal. While it could be an option for any sound minded adult to consent to , as many drug trials are, this is not offered as such. Unfortunately, many working Ohioans, such as myself, are being faced with the “choice” to take the vaccine or voluntarily terminate our employment. This is not a choice, this is coercion, and again, in my understanding, illegal, all in the name of money. The employee compliance rate determines the Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement so the health and welfare of the frontline healthcare workers is sacrificed for payment.

For a virus that has a 98% survival rate, and coming from someone who is Covid recovered, it should be an individual choice, not a mandate. I am not opposed to vaccines, in fact myself and my children are all vaccinated with informed choice and consent. This vaccine has only been in existence for mere months, and there is no data to support its efficacy. In years to come, with trials complete, risk may outweigh the benefits. In the present time, I hope and pray for no mandate.

Sincerely yours,

Michelle Harrington, BSN, RN