

**OHIO ASSOCIATION OF
BOARDS OF HEALTH**

Testimony before the
House Health Committee

House Bill 248

August 24, 2021

Chairman Lipps, ranking member Russo, and members of the House Health Committee, I am Sally Morgan, president of the Franklin County Board of Health. I offer this testimony on behalf of the Ohio Association of Boards of Health (OABH) in opposition to House Bill 248, which proposes dramatic and sweeping changes in vaccination policy in Ohio. OABH is the state association representing members of the local boards of health across Ohio.

OABH shares the concerns that you have heard from many regarding HB 248, because it would significantly weaken the robust public health framework that protects our communities from the devastation of many vaccine-preventable diseases. The prevention of communicable diseases, and their spread should an outbreak occur, is the primary mission of local boards of health. As board members, we are charged with minimizing and mitigating the risk of infectious disease in the communities we serve. This bill would decimate our progress in public health in the past century and hinder our efforts to fight communicable diseases in the years to come, because it changes policies related to all vaccines, not just COVID-19!

Ohio already has some of the most lenient vaccination requirements in the country. Parents and guardians can currently opt out of ANY vaccination for various reasons – medical, religious, philosophical, etc. This bill will go even further by prohibiting schools and childcare providers from requesting vaccination records and even prohibits parents from voluntarily submitting these records.

Vaccinations are truly one of public health's greatest success stories. Through continued scientific breakthroughs in this regard, we continue to be protected from a multitude of deadly and contagious communicable diseases.

Worldwide, UNICEF reports an estimated 20 million children's lives have been saved by measles vaccinations between 2000 and 2016. Global polio cases have rapidly declined by over 99.9% in just over 30 years due largely to vaccinations. Additionally, a study published earlier this year found that an estimated 69 million lives will be saved by vaccinations against 10 major pathogens between 2000 and 2030.

Every August we celebrate National Immunization Awareness Month, which highlights these achievements and strives to share science-based information about the value and safety of vaccines for people of all ages.

Science has demonstrated that vaccinations not only provide critical protection for infants, young children, and immunocompromised individuals, but also keep ourselves, our families, and our neighbors safe. We cannot afford to risk weakening that protection with HB 248. Vaccinations do not take away our freedoms; vaccinations give us freedom.

Thank you for your consideration of local boards of health concerns, and once again, we urge the committee to reject HB 248 to keep Ohioans safe from preventable illness.