

August 10, 2021

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

My name is Sheena Hayward, and I am here to tell you why I support HB 248. I work as a Cat Scan Technologist for a Level 1 Trauma Center in Akron, Ohio.

Just shy of two weeks ago, it was announced that if staff does not get BOTH doses of the vaccine by October 17, 2021, we will be terminated. That gives us very little time to get this done. I have chosen not to receive this vaccine for several reasons but the most important is for the unknown side effects to my fertility. I have been seeing a fertility specialist for over a year. While some reports say that there is no evidence that the COVID vaccine has any effect on fertility, others report the opposite. I know women who have had their hormones affected. Menstrual cycles changed. Some have had complications, including ending in stillborn deliveries. It may only be a few women, but a few adds up. I sought out advice from my doctor and the response was mind blowing. They sent me their vaccine policy. It is clearly stated in the document that "since the vaccine trials did not include pregnant woman, we are unable to evaluate the safety data for pregnant women. However existing safety data suggests the risk of fetal harm from mRNA vaccines is very low" The employee who sent me the email included "we recommend our patients get it" and added a winky face emoji. I couldn't believe that I am coming to them as a scared individual who is worried about her medical well-being, and the response ended with a winky face. This is not a winky face type of conversation. Politicians, employers, and the media are all just shoving these so-called facts and data down our throats and ending it all with "don't worry it'll be fine its safe", winky face. If there was zero testing done on pregnant women, how can you assure me that it is indeed safe? I am already mentally and physically stressed about my future as a mother. I am almost thirty-six years old. I am considered high risk. Being injected with a vaccine that is not FDA regulated, that I do not feel comfortable taking, does not lessen the anxiety I have been dealing with for the past three years.

Ever since the start of the pandemic I have been labeled as "essential". I went to work every day in fear of the unknown. I was confused, scared, and worried about COVID, yet kept showing up to take care of the people in my community. I made sacrifices by staying home and not going near any of my friends and family to keep them all safe from the virus. Many called us hospital workers heroes. My hospital did not supply us with enough PPE. I wore the same N95 mask for months at a time. For almost an entire year I worked without proper precautions, but I never complained because I understood we were in a crisis. I'm sure it's like this at every hospital in America right now, right? Other employers/companies were giving their employees bonuses for having to work during these tough times. I most certainly never saw any bonus money. Not so much as a pizza party. I have worked this entire time unvaccinated, but now I am considered selfish and irresponsible because I am making a personal decision about my body. Last year's hero, this year's scumbag.

My life, my well-being, my future of becoming a mother, are all now in the hands of my employer. What happened to "my body, my choice"? Not important anymore. No one should ever be put in a situation where they must choose between their health and beliefs, or their source of income. This is why this bill is so important. I deserve the right to CHOOSE to be vaccinated and not FORCED. Others may have more time, but the clock is ticking for me.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on the need for the urgency of House Bill 248.

Sincerely,

Sheena Hayward