



**FROM THE DESK OF
COUNCILWOMAN LISA KELLER**

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Craig and Honorable Members of the General Government Budget Committee thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony on HB218. I am in favor of this legislature passing protections for Ohioans against vaccination mandates but feel there is justification to substantially amend this bill to offer greater protections for Ohioans.

I am Lisa Keller, a member of Delaware City Council for the past 13 years. I have been following the issue closely as it greatly impacts the community I serve. Almost daily I receive communications from constituents who are either facing termination or who have already been terminated over vaccination mandates.

I also join you today from Delaware County- the most vaccinated county in the state of Ohio. Our health district has 80% of our population over the age of 12 fully vaccinated and 95.6% of our most at risk, over 65 population fully vaccinated.¹ 95.6%. You can not find a more vaccinated place in Ohio. I should be here to tell you how much success our community has achieved with this extraordinarily high vaccination rate but unfortunately, that is not what we've experienced.

This fall between August to September, we saw 241% more deaths within the Delaware Public Health District than we did during the fall of 2020 when no vaccine was available. That number sounds incredulous but it is true and based upon publicly available data from our health district. Compared to the fall of 2020 the fall of 2021 saw an increase in hospitalizations of 48%.² A high level of vaccination did not spare us from the worst impacts of Covid-19- hospitalizations and deaths. And it didn't spare us from continued spread either. Like the rest of

¹ <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

² <https://www.facebook.com/DelawareHealth/posts/4576246979109556>

Ohio, our county is red indicating a high level of transmission according to the CDC.³

Our national public health officials and even our President have assured us repeatedly vaccination was the key to safety. CDC Director Rachel Walensky said in July 2021 that vaccinated people do not carry the virus and do not get sick. "And that it's not just in the clinical trials, it's also in real-world data."⁴ President Biden told the nation during a CNN townhall in Cincinnati in July "You're not going to get Covid if you get this vaccine."⁵ Even our own Governor Mike DeWine tweeted on May 12 that vaccinated individuals had 100% protection. Vaccination mandates are based upon this clear messaging- that vaccinated people don't get Covid-19 and don't transmit Covid-19. Many business owners, public officials and it seems even our President still believe this to be the latest science. If vaccinated individuals could become infected and still transmit the virus, what would the purpose be of a vaccination mandate?

Between August and October 2021, in my home county- the most vaccinated county in the state of Ohio, the fully vaccinated made up 22% of our cases, 40% of our hospitalizations and 26% of our deaths.⁶ These numbers do not match what Dr. Fauci told us in July when he said, "No matter what study you look at, the protection against severe disease leading to hospitalization is always well within the 90%, regardless of the study, regardless of the country."⁷ And these efficacy numbers didn't change because of the Delta variant because it was the Delta variant Fauci was referring to while assuring the public the current vaccines would hold up very well.

³ <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

⁴ <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2021/07/08/1014214448/fauci-says-current-vaccines-will-stand-up-to-the-delta-variant>

⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/07/22/remarks-by-president-biden-in-a-cnn-town-hall-with-don-lemon/>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/DelawareHealth/posts/4576246979109556>

⁷ <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2021/07/08/1014214448/fauci-says-current-vaccines-will-stand-up-to-the-delta-variant>

The problem with this messaging from the President, CDC Director and Dr. Fauci is that we now have real world data that doesn't match. High levels of vaccination did not create a safe, Covid free environment anywhere. It didn't in any country in the world. It didn't in any state in the United States and it didn't in any county in Ohio.

Scientists at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public health detail this in a study published in September 2021. Researchers wanted to know if high vaccination compliance led to a noted reduction in cases anywhere. Quite simply, it didn't. There was "no discernable relationship" found between the percentage of the population vaccinated and the number of cases. In fact, the trend line in this correlation indicated a high percentage of the population vaccinated was marginally associated with an increase in cases. Furthermore, the study noted Israel as having one of the highest case rates despite being among the highest in vaccination compliance. The study also noted Iceland and Portugal, with vaccination rates over 75%, both having higher levels of cases than Vietnam and South Africa with 10% of their population vaccinated. The same held true for counties within the U.S. Of the 5 counties with the highest vaccination rates in the entire country, Chattahoochee, Georgia, McKinley, New Mexico and Arecibo, Puerto Rico were all considered "high transmission" and red according to the CDC map.⁸ This sounds very similar to Delaware County, Ohio.

I am not here to tell you there is no health benefit to vaccination in the recipient. I'm not a medical doctor. I am, however, a public official who wondered how I could be living in the most vaccinated county in the state and still be in the thick of the pandemic with the rest of Ohio. To answer that question for myself, I dug into the research and what was happening around the world to clearly understand one point- high levels of vaccination do not have the impact that was promised. And knowing that, any justification for a vaccine mandate evaporates. If high rates of vaccination didn't stop transmission in Israel, Iceland, Portugal, Chattahoochee Georgia or even in Delaware County, Ohio what makes anyone think high levels of vaccination will ensure a safe environment in a workplace, a school, a Children's Hospital or an ICU? And just what if demanding this level of compliance through a mandate makes things marginally worse, like the researchers at Harvard discovered?

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8481107/>

Now that we all have access to this data, our public health officials are rewriting history and telling us they never promised the vaccine would stop Covid. Yes they did. They did on TV. They did in interviews. They did all over. And they still continue to insist vaccination is the key to some mystical place no one in the world has been able to achieve. A new variant was discovered in 4 fully vaccinated individuals. The solution? Get vaccinated.

Sub HB218 begins with the assumption that vaccination mandates are acceptable. This is because of the false premise vaccination will stop transmission. It won't. When can we stop ignoring the science on this?

Sub HB218 also allows, in cases of special circumstances, individuals to be exempted from vaccination requirements while not going far enough to ensure they aren't discriminated against for this choice. Why do individuals need an exemption from a vaccine that we know doesn't stop transmission? Why do individuals in Children's Hospitals, ICUs and CCUs not have access to these exemptions- especially if there is science that shows this requirement could actually make things worse? Can anyone point me to the science that shows individuals won't transmit the virus once they are vaccinated?

Before requiring individuals to submit in writing their request to be exempt, wouldn't you first have to prove with science it would be effective? And it was efficacious, shouldn't you be able to point to some country in the world, some state in the U.S or some county where high rates of vaccination stopped spread?

Please respectfully consider substantially amending this bill to prevent Covid vaccine mandates from occurring in the first place. Please simplify all the complicated language, exclusions and sunset clauses by following the lead of other states like Montana and Florida that have protected individuals from vaccination mandates being issued. If the business community pushes back, if the hospital associations complain, request the science that definitively justifies that a vaccination mandate stops spread. Ask them if a vaccinated hospital worker or employee who is infected can still spread the virus to others. It is an uncomfortable truth and someone needs to acknowledge the elephant that has been in the room for months.

Protect the people who elected you to represent them and preserve their right to decide what goes into their own body. Their employer doesn't have that right. Their school doesn't have that right. They have that right and it is your job to protect that.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.