

November 29, 2021

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Craig and Honorable Members of the General Government Budget Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB218.

I am writing in support of a bill that states we should have exemptions to any vaccine or medication mandate coming from employers or schools.

However, I do not agree with the language that excludes employees of children's hospitals and intensive care settings. These employees, including myself, DO have the same right to take exemptions as anyone else under The Civil Rights Act of 1964. Excluding some individuals while allowing exemptions for other individuals does not support the protection of ALL Ohio employees.

I have worked at Cleveland Clinic Children's Hospital for 10 years. I am a pediatric occupational therapist and see children in an inpatient setting. Vaccines protect the individuals who receive them. Receiving a vaccination does not make me more or less of a risk to the population I serve. It protects me, not my patients. The current wording in this bill excludes employees of children's hospitals from receiving exemptions to vaccines and medical mandates. The wording needs to be changed to include exemptions for all Ohio employees.

I am glad to see acknowledgement of natural immunity being offered as a valid exemption, however I think the language in this section needs to be updated to reflect how natural immunity can be claimed. To ask that it is proven by antibody test and comparing it to that of a vaccinated person is not realistic nor how immunity works over time. A person who was naturally infected and has immunity may produce a positive antibody test for some time, but it is not reasonable to expect this will last indefinitely. However, research supports the role of SARS-Co V-2 specific T cells (our long lasting immunity) following natural immunity. I think this bill needs to be changed to include proof by positive test or documented case only.

Thank you for your time,

Suzanne Messer

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