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The MetroHealth System
HB 218 – Opponent Testimony
Senate General Government Budget Committee
December 7, 2021**

Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Senate General Government Budget Committee, on behalf of The MetroHealth System, I am offering testimony today in opposition to House Bill 218.

MetroHealth plays an essential role in delivering health care to our community, and that has been more important than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic. MetroHealth is Northeast Ohio's safety-net hospital, and cares for the most under-resourced members of our community. The system cares for anyone who comes through our doors, regardless ability to pay, and is committed to improving the overall health of the community and reducing health disparities and health inequities. Our staff of more than 600 physicians, 1,700 nurses, and 7,800 employees provides care at MetroHealth's four hospitals, four emergency departments, and more than 20 health centers and 40 additional sites. The health system runs Cuyahoga County's most experienced Level I Adult Trauma Center, verified since 1992, and Ohio's only adult and pediatric trauma and burn center. MetroHealth annually serves about 300,000 patients at more than 1.4 million visits in its hospitals and health centers; 75 percent of those patients are uninsured or covered by Medicare or Medicaid.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my concerns about H.B. 218. This legislation would prevent employers from requiring employees to get the COVID-19 vaccine, except for those COVID-19 vaccines that are fully approved by the FDA. It also prohibits any employers from requiring proof of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, in addition to requiring an employer to honor very broad exceptions.

As a health care institution, I believe MetroHealth is in the best position to understand the risks that COVID-19 poses to our employees and our patients, as well as how best to protect them from transmitting and contracting this disease. This legislation threatens to disrupt our carefully considered efforts to use the safety measures that we consider most effective.

For nearly two years, MetroHealth's staff has worked tirelessly to save lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. The safety of our staff and our patients has been, and must continue to be, our highest priority. The vaccine is the best method by which to protect our staff and our patients. H.B. 218 would tie our hands in an ever-changing situation presented by the pandemic and not allow us to verify that our employees are vaccinated against COVID-19.



I am proud of the perseverance and dedication of our front-line workers in the fight against COVID-19. We have done an amazing job serving our patients and the broader Cuyahoga County community in this battle. As a health care institution, we know firsthand the risks to our patients and employees from COVID-19, and what it takes to make MetroHealth a healthy workplace. I oppose any legislation that would prevent MetroHealth from using a tool, such as a vaccine, that can lower risk to our employees and patients.

Given the significant concerns raised by H.B. 218, I respectfully request that the Senate General Government Budget Committee not favorably report this legislation.

Thank you.