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MAKING A BETTER WORLD FOR ALL OHIOANS.

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December 7, 2021

Ohio Chemistry Technology Council Written Testimony In Opposition to House Bill 218

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Senate General Government and Budget Committee, my name is Andy Swaim. I am the Director of Government and External Affairs for the Ohio Chemistry Technology Council (OCTC). Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 218 (HB 218).

OCTC is the leading advocate for Ohio's chemistry industry. Ohio is the third largest chemical manufacturing state in the United States. The chemistry industry in Ohio employs over 40,000 people, pays an average wage of over \$85,000, and ships more than \$5.6 billion in products worldwide every year.

The OCTC represents manufacturers that employ many highly trained individuals from skilled tradespeople to engineers to chemists and many more. Our member companies are not immune to the current workforce challenges facing nearly every sector of the economy. That said, OCTC believes these types of workplace policies should remain as a decision made by employers, not subject to legislative intrusion.

It is important to note that the vast majority of our member companies are not currently pursuing vaccination mandates at this time. They came to those decisions by thoroughly studying their own health and safety practices, along with the advice of legal and financial professionals, as well as receiving input from their own employees. Even so, OCTC opposes the provisions in HB 218 which would effectively negate the efficacy of those policies for businesses that do want to mandate vaccinations.

HB 218 would essentially allow for individuals to ignore any such vaccination policy by providing overly broad exemptions for employees. Existing exemptions, such as for medical needs and for sincerely held religious beliefs, already exist and comprehensively accommodate individuals who legitimately are unable to comply with such policies.



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Allowing for overly broad exemptions would effectively ban all vaccination requirements by making those policies so ineffective that no reasonable company would ever implement one.

HB 218 also sets dangerous precedents for our industry. Due to the potential volatility of many of our products and feedstocks, the chemical industry has robust environmental, health, and safety protocols that we implement at our facilities. While it is not unusual for a government agency to set minimum standards for these areas, it is highly unusual for the government to ban certain practices, products, or policies that have the potential to improve workplace health and safety. This legislation would set a very concerning precedent that the legislature could arbitrarily remove a tool from our toolbox when undertaking our responsibilities in maintaining safe facilities.

HB 218 is a misguided bill that will set a dangerous precedent in workplace health and safety. OCTC respectfully requests that the committee not advance this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on this measure.