



Opponent Testimony
Association of Ohio Health Commissioners
House Bill 218
12/7/21

Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate General Government Budget Committee:

The Association of Ohio Health Commissioners, which represents the 112 local health districts in Ohio who have been on the front lines fighting to control the COVID-19 pandemic for the past 20 months, submits this written testimony to express our concerns about House Bill (HB) 218. The bill imposes prohibitions on private businesses and other entities across the state of Ohio related to vaccination intended to prevent COVID-19 and limit its impact on the health and wellness of Ohioans. We believe that private entities should have the option to require this highly effective and safe vaccine for their employees. Such a commitment by employers demonstrates not only their concern for the economic success of their business, but also the health and safety of their employees and customers.

Further, the timing of this proposal is extremely short-sighted, given that Ohio's transmission rates remain high from the latest surge of the Delta variant, and the US is preparing to face the next extremely dangerous omicron variant. In order to prevent future surges and to successfully and permanently emerge from the constant impact of this virus, we must continue to increase the number of Ohioans protected by vaccination.

Vaccination is our best weapon to ultimately control the spread of this disease. Therefore, **legitimate exemptions should be as limited as possible**. The public health system has been working, along with our community partners, since February 2020 to gain the upper hand against this virus. We ask for your help by encouraging vaccination, rather than promoting broad and wide opportunities to be exempted from vaccination requirements aimed at promoting the health and safety of our citizens.

For these reasons, we strongly oppose HB 218 and we ask that you not move the bill forward.

As always, we welcome the opportunity to participate in the dialogue on this life-and-death issue, including any proposals the General Assembly may have to bring this virus under control.

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