

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Cirino and Ranking Senator Craig,

As a pediatrician in Cincinnati, Ohio I am greatly concerned about the negative impact that Ohio House Bill 218 would have on our state's children. H.B. 218 represents an impeding public health crisis. I urge you to vote **against** H.B. 218. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.

This proposed legislation is dangerously broad – placing restrictions on public and private entities that would drastically decrease the safety of my pediatric patients and all Ohioans. Employers' right to manage their workplaces free of undue interference from the government must be protected. It is essential that the institutions where our children play, learn, and seek medical care have the right to offer protection against preventable illnesses. H.B. 218 minimizes the life-saving role of vaccines – especially for children who are too young to be vaccinated and medically vulnerable populations of all ages. While there are exemptions in the bill that apply to intensive care units and children's hospitals, the bill does encompass most healthcare facilities including primary care offices where many children seek care. Imagine an infant, too young to be vaccinated against measles, exposed to a staff member at a primary clinic who was not required to be vaccinated against measles. The infant may become seriously ill or die from measles – because the primary care office that is supposed to care for and protect them lost their ability to do so via standard and evidence-based vaccine requirements.

**This bill threatens to thwart Ohio's progress in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic.** H.B. 218 would allow Ohioans to opt out of COVID-19 vaccine requirements with little effort. This dilutes the positive impact of vaccination. Anti-vaccine advocates have demonized pediatricians for trying to keep children safe during a global pandemic. The General Assembly should not downplay the fact that personal choices regarding vaccination have consequences for the general public. Low vaccination rates will contribute to a longer and more devastating pandemic.

**Ohio House Bill 218 is not about freedom of choice, it is about public health. We have the incredible ability to protect Ohio's children from vaccine preventable deadly illnesses. Why should those who choose to refuse this privilege threaten the health and safety of the rest of our population?**

Thank you,

Elizabeth Ireson, MD  
Pediatrician