



Dear Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Cirino, and Ranking Senator Craig, thank you reviewing my testimony opposing *House Bill 218* (HB-218).

If passed, HB-218 would permit an individual to obtain an exemption from institutional vaccine requirements for reasons of “personal conscience, including religious convictions” as long as they submit “a written statement.” The bill stipulates that such an individual “shall not be required to submit any additional information beyond the written statement.”

Effective mechanisms to appropriately exempt individuals from required vaccination for reasons of medical need or religious practice already exist – as they should. But it is also ethically appropriate for individuals to provide reasons for their exemption request, and ethically permissible for institutions to ask for clarifying or additional information about an individual’s request.

Vaccine requirements contribute to the public good of a healthy society. Like many other public goods to which we individually contribute, there is a reasonable expectation that each person contribute to a collectively shared benefit – in this case the benefit of public health. In some cases individuals will be unable to do so for overriding reasons – such as medical or religious contraindication. It is appropriate for individuals seeking an exemption from a vaccine requirement to provide reasons for their request in order to verify that it is a valid reason relevant to the vaccine(s) in question.

In our pluralistic society we support diverse individuals and views. But we also should expect to hold each other – and be held accountable by others – for providing public reasons for our views as part of the project of deliberative democracy in which we are engaged. HB-218 would not support the process of public reasons and deliberative democracy that our political process, and the public goods in which we share, such as public health, in which we participate.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth Lanphier". The signature is written in a cursive style and is followed by a long, horizontal flourish.

Elizabeth Lanphier, PhD, MS, HEC-C