

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Cirino, and Ranking Senator Craig, I am a voter in US Congressional District 1, OH Senate District 9, and OH State Rep. District 32, writing to you today about my deep concern for the implications of HB 218.

I am a clinical neonatology fellow at a major children's hospital in Cincinnati. HB 218 is deeply harmful legislation that would dangerously undermine Ohio's ongoing pandemic recovery efforts. The proposed broadening of vaccine exemptions under this legislation effectively takes away the rights of many individuals who have businesses in Ohio to implement important safety measures meant to protect their employees, clients, and others from COVID-19. Ohio's businesses, healthcare facilities, schools, and universities must retain their rights to make decisions in the best interest of their employees and those they serve.

Vaccines save lives. The vaccines developed against COVID-19 save lives. As a scientist, I use objective data to make decisions about what is best for the babies I care for in the NICU. I have taken care of multiple babies whose mothers died from COVID-19 perinatally – none of the mothers had been vaccinated. I beg of you to compare mortality data between those who are vaccinated and those who are not and make policy-based decisions using these data. Vaccines save lives.

As Rep. Beth Liston (D-Dublin) put it simply, "This bill panders to extremist groups and conspiracy theorists who have led the charge in pushing anti-vaccine bills. HB 218 gets in the way of expert, business, school, and community efforts to provide safety. It will prolong the pandemic and lead to more people dying in our state."

Rather than help us to overcome the threat posed by COVID-19, this legislation would further endanger us and cause severe disruption to our state's health, economy, and way of life.

HB 218 is not an appropriate solution. I urge you to reject this legislation, protect the vitality of Ohio's families, and avoid disastrous consequences for the future of our state.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Eric A. Raynal