

To: Members of the Ohio Senate General Government Budget Committee

Fr: Monica Hueckel, Senior Director of Government Relations, Ohio State Medical Association

Da: December 7, 2021

Re: Substitute HB 218

---

On behalf of the Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA), the state's oldest and largest professional organization representing Ohio physicians, medical residents, and medical students, I am writing today in opposition to substitute House Bill 218. Our physician members remain deeply concerned that rather than help us to overcome the threat posed by COVID-19 to our state, this legislation will further endanger many Ohioans' lives and cause severe disruption to our health, economy, and way of life.

Employers are required to provide a safe workplace for their staff. Businesses have a responsibility to assess risk of disease exposure and develop a plan to protect their clientele and staff from health and safety hazards. By broadening exemptions for vaccination requirements, Substitute HB 218 would effectively take away the rights of most Ohio business owners and operators to determine standards in order to prevent employees from posing direct safety threats to each other and other individuals in the workplace.

It is critical that employers, including hospitals and medical facilities, are able to consider the unique circumstances of their business operations and implement health and safety precautions they deem most appropriate to carry out their services and protect the well-being of all involved. Not only do healthcare facilities need to protect their staff from infectious disease, but they also have a responsibility to protect the patients in their care, including vulnerable patients that would be at serious risk of harm through exposure to unvaccinated individuals that may unknowingly spread disease through contact and proximity.

OSMA is extremely concerned about the impact of legislation that would discourage vaccination rates in Ohio. It is particularly troubling as the Delta variant continues to spread, the new Omicron variant starts to show up across the country, and positive COVID-19 cases in Ohio have been rising recently.

We urge you to avoid undermining pandemic recovery efforts by rejecting Substitute HB 218. Thank you for your consideration of our comments, and please feel free to reach out to us with any questions.