

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Wilson, and Honorable Members of the General Government Budget Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Sub House Bill 218.

My name is Monica Steele and I am a wife, mother of four, and a mechanical engineer. I am a proponent of vaccine choice, privacy, and informed consent as a policy in the State of Ohio. I support legislation that provides protections for Ohioans against vaccines mandates, but feel Sub House Bill 218 needs amended to provide greater protection for all Ohioans. I am in favor of protections against vaccination mandates because I make the decisions regarding my health and my children's health and it should not be directed by any government, business, school, employer, or anyone else.

I am currently facing termination from my job unless they grant me a religious exemption. A religious exemption that is protected by law. However instead of just allowing for freedom of choice, I must provide a written statement of my sincerely held religious beliefs, submit to my employer, and they may tell me whether or not they accept it or not. To fight it, I must go to court. My husband is also facing termination from his employer and must also put his sincerely held beliefs in writing. We are both employed by private employers. Employers that have acknowledged that federal cases have put mandates on hold, but feel they have found a loophole to charge ahead with a mandatory vaccination policy. Ohio must close these loopholes and protect every Ohioan that are faced with choosing an injection or facing termination.

I make choices every day regarding my health. I weigh consequences in all my decisions. If I decide to eat nothing but Big Macs and Whoppers, that will affect my health. Everything in life has risk. Some risk is preventable. Some risk is higher than other risk. I choose what risks I want to take. Some risks are temporary, but others are not. I only have risk of dying on an airplane crash while I am on an airplane. I can only die in a skydiving accident while I am skydiving. Specifically with the COVID-19 vaccine, the risk becomes part of me. There is an immediate risk of reactions to the injection. There is a future risk of developing a health condition days or weeks after the injection. There is risk long term on what this injection may do in the future. While some risks are minor, the ultimate risk is death, which is 100% preventable, at least from the vaccine. I will not die from the vaccine if I do not get the vaccine. I am in control of my health. I am more than a number in the census. My life matters too. My children's lives matter too.

I worry about losing my job because I do not want to take an experimental vaccine. I worry I will not be able to provide for my family. I worry that segregation will return. I worry that my children will have limited opportunities in this great country. I worry what my children's future will look like. Will I not be able to fly domestically without having a swab shoved up my nose? Should we not learn from history? Will I need to wear an "A" on my chest, be hung for only a suspicion, show my card, or use a different drinking fountain? If we are in this together, why does it not feel that way?

The entire principle behind the Covid-19 vaccine is that if you happen to catch COVID-19, then you have a less chance of dying. Why should it matter if I have the vaccine or not? If you have the vaccine, it does not mean that you cannot get COVID-19. It does not mean you cannot spread COVID-19. The vaccine "protects" you from dying. If I want to accept the risk that I may get COVID-19, then I accept the risk that I may get a horrible case and die. Once the door is open to mandating experimental vaccines, the sky is the limit of what can be mandated. And that is not OK. That is not what America was founded on. If I had a DNR in my living will, then that should be respected. If I am not an organ donor, then my organs would not be donated when I die. If I chose to not fight cancer, then my choice would be

respected. **If we can respect the wishes for those who are dying, then why can we not respect the wishes of those who are living?**

My vaccination history is not the greeter at Costco's business. Nor Delta airlines. Nor anyone else except my doctor. I am not a lesser human because I believe differently. I should still be able to move around society without showing a vaccine card or wearing a face mask, which signals me as being "different".

There is already a separation in societal status. My children's future should not depend on what we choose to put into our bodies. Right now, my main focus is the COVID-19 vaccine, but where does it end? What vaccine will come in the future that will be required by government or an employer or school?

As my daughter is preparing for college, we are closely monitoring how other states are handling this vaccine and vaccine passports. She is not considering any Ohio colleges because Ohio does not protect our freedoms. We, as a family of 6, are fully prepared to leave this great state we love for a state that honors freedom over injections.

If someone wants to take this injection, go for it. If they want to eat 10 Big Macs in one sitting, go for it. If someone feels safe wearing a mask, then wear as many as you want. These are all choices and they are not a one size fits all. These choices do not apply to everyone. If government was so concerned about health, then perhaps we should focus on healthy eating, vitamins, and exercise. **Health does not come from an injection.**

I urge you to amend Sub House Bill 218 and protect the freedoms of all Ohio citizens, current and future, in every sector.

Sincerely,

Monica Steele