

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Cirino and Ranking Senator Craig;

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB-218. My name is Nives Zimmermann, MD. I am a practicing physician at an academic health center in Ohio. I stand in vigorous opposition to HB-218, a proposed bill that itself stands in opposition to the health and well-being of Ohioans.

As a physician at our region's only adult academic health system and provider of tertiary/quaternary care, I care for the most vulnerable patients in our region. To protect these patients and my colleagues, our front line workers, my employer embraces every opportunity to provide world class health care in a safe environment. This includes requiring employees to be vaccinated against infectious diseases that might otherwise cause serious harm, or even death, to our patients and clinical staff. It is critically important that my employer has the ability to implement safety protocols, including vaccinations, to prevent the spread of infectious diseases when caring for our highly vulnerable patients. House Bill 218 will endanger the lives of our patients, their families, and our team members.

I strongly believe in the efficacy, safety and necessity of vaccines. Not only does House Bill 218 weaken our current public health framework, it undermines decades of advancements in research and discoveries eradicating deadly diseases. HB 218 is deeply harmful legislation that would dangerously undermine Ohio's ongoing pandemic recovery efforts. It also would have long-lasting effects on combating childhood diseases. The proposed broadening of vaccine exemptions under this legislation effectively takes away the rights of the majority of 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.

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 the opportunity to voice my opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

Nives Zimmermann, MD