

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Senator Craig, thank you sincerely for the opportunity to provide testimony on *House Bill 218* (HB-218).

My name is Patricia Manning-Courtney, MD. I am a Developmental Pediatrician, and current Chief of Staff at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. I stand in strong opposition to HB-218, a bill that would further erode the public health framework that keeps us all safe from deadly outbreaks of communicable disease, and directly threaten the health and safety of the children of OH.

As a Developmental Pediatrician specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, I witnessed firsthand the damage that was caused by the belief that vaccines cause Autism Spectrum Disorder. Vaccination rates dropped, leading to measles outbreaks, including in OH. Perhaps less dangerous, but heartbreaking nonetheless was seeing families struggle with the decision to vaccinate their children, and feeling as if they had to choose between the real risk of deadly diseases and the unfounded risk of possible Autism Spectrum Disorder. By introducing a wide range of exemption opportunities, HB218 would sow further doubt in vaccines, and greatly increase the likelihood that more children would go unvaccinated.

As Chief of Staff at one of the top children's hospitals in the country, during a global pandemic, I witnessed firsthand the impact that Covid-19 has had on children and families, directly and indirectly. Losses of all types, that can't really be fully tallied. As a practicing Pediatrician for more than 20 years, I fully appreciate the role that vaccines have played in child health and safety. While Children's Hospitals are exempt from the provisions of this bill, the patients that we treat are not, and it's clear that this bill would make it much easier for many children to go unvaccinated. The potential impact on child health is hard to imagine.

Ohio already has some of the most lenient approaches to requiring vaccination, and vaccination rates are already amongst the lowest in the country. HB-218 would further degrade the safety we are all afforded by the privilege of being vaccinated.

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

Sincerely,

Patricia Manning-Courtney, M.D.