

Opposition Testimony for House Bill 218
Ohio Senate General Government Budget Committee
December 6, 2021

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Craig, and Members of the Senate General Government Budget Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony on Sub House Bill 218.

I am Robert Vance, a small business owner, and the husband of a healthcare employee, and a father to two young children. I will keep my testimony short and sweet, briefly addressing this legislation as it pertains to those three topics – my business, my wife’s employment, and my children.

Whenever I approach an issue, I always tackle the easy stuff first to get it out of the way, so let me address being a small business owner first. To put it simply, businesses have no right to require an worker receive a pharmaceutical as a condition of employment, to discriminate against a worker who decides for themselves that they do not want to receive a particular vaccine, etc. As a business owner, part of my job is to protect all employees’ safety. I do not want the liability of a worker getting vaccinated, becoming injured, and then holding me liable for their work-related injury. Nor do I want the guilt of knowing a required vaccine injured a worker. Furthermore, as a business owner, it is my responsibility to ensure I provide a non-discriminatory workplace for workers - I do not want the liability from requiring an employee to receive a vaccine against their religious beliefs, or their personal health concerns. As a business owner, I’m also required to ensure that worker’s employment records remain private - I do not want the responsibility or liability of maintaining additional records for workers, much less healthcare records. I could go on, but to the point, as a business owner, I do not have the right to the inside of a worker’s body, nor do I want it.

As it pertains to my wife. For years healthcare workers have been required by their employers to subscribe to a mandatory Influenza vaccination program against our wishes. My wife has been no exception. In fact, I personally know a number healthcare professionals who have made either religious or medical accommodation requests to their employers to opt out of the Flu shot – some of whom had requests denied and were subsequently quit their job in lieu of getting the vaccine; some of whom were terminated from their employment for refusing the shot; and one of whom filed a lawsuit against their former employer and was awarded a settlement. However, now this is no longer some anecdote, there’s literally thousands of healthcare workers with their jobs being threatened, some of whom have already been put on unpaid administrative leave. Fortunately for my wife, for the past half a dozen years, although she has been required to receive the Influenza vaccine yearly, her employer has honored her request for a religious accommodation. However, several weeks ago, my wife’s employer announced to employees that all religious exemptions were being denied because they “posed an undue hardship” on the employer. However, the punishment for not receiving the jab wasn’t termination, it was their annual merit pay being withheld. As if that somehow mitigates the spread of a virus. When the employer issued this notice, their 75% Covid-19 vaccine compliance rate that had been plateaued for months bumped 20%. They coerced 20% of their employees to get the vaccine against their will because they couldn’t afford to take a permanent pay cut. For my wife, the cut in pay equaled tens of thousands of dollars if she were to remain employed for another decade, and that’s not considering any other pay increases that may also be compounded into that amount. That’s her just missing this one year’s pay raise. Fortunately, her employer rescinded their policy and started accepting religious exemptions again. However, a few days ago she was notified that she had days to get the vaccine or be put on unpaid administrative leave; since her exemption had yet to be approved. Upon contacting human resources, she was told her exemption was “still being reviewed”. You see the coercive tactics? What’s worse, each year she goes the entire year healthy, free of illness, wearing her mask, keeping her opinions to herself, while her Flu vaccinated co-workers came to work visibly sick – running noses, coughing, etc. But you know, “science”, because they were vaccinated, they were safe; and because my wife was healthy, not ill, but unvaccinated, she was a “global threat”. The policies are nonsensical. And through Coronapocalypse, the policies didn’t become any more logical, any more “scientific”, in fact they have just become even more irrational, contrived, and discriminatory. Our healthcare industry has been unable to demonstrate that any of these work-related policies have made any impact on patient care, yet they continue to perpetuate them, they continue not to analyze their effectiveness, they continue to implement these policies based on any motivation other than health and science. I will restate what I mentioned above... An employer does not have the right to the inside of a worker’s body.

I will conclude by raising concerns regarding my children. Why is it that the healthcare industry and our government promote vaccines and drugs, but not exercise and healthy eating? Shouldn't our healthcare professionals be advocating for legislation to require kids to partake in more physical education in childcare and schools. Shouldn't our healthcare professionals be advocating for legislation to require childcare providers and schools to provide healthier lunches? Our family feeds our children organic foods almost exclusively. We spend about a hundred bucks a week just on organic fruits and vegetables. But I send my children to even one of the best preschools in Central Ohio, and they still get cheese balls for snack. Our kids have always had lots of outside play time, we have even begun enrolling them in athletics, like a seasonal running club. Yet schools have an hour of recess a day, physical education instruction one day a week. But our solution is to pump kids up with more pharmaceuticals. Our family stays home when we're sick, we don't send our kids to pre-school, we load up on vitamins, we get outside for fresh air and sunlight, we alter our food intake, and so on. Shouldn't our public health officials be promoting that kind of behavior in homes? Shouldn't our public health officials be advocating for employers to provide more flexibility for ill employees, or who have ill family members, so they can stay home and recover properly? But our solution is to pump kids up with more pharmaceuticals.

It's all nonsensical and just demonstrates how insincere health officials are being. If this isn't about actual health, what's it about? Clearly pharmaceutical companies and healthcare officials aren't concerned about actual health, like I mentioned, they don't make actual health their primary focus. Spoiler alert, it's about control, power, and money.

Enter Sub HB 218. This bill is a bill that was simply engineered to appease both pharmaceutical and healthcare lobbying organizations, because it would still largely leave them able to enforce vaccine requirements, but also angry voters who have been begging for relief, but only in an effort to try and right their capsizing election campaigns. Ohioans don't want their liberties piecemealed away, they want them preserved completely. Ohioans want the protections that were delineated in Ohio House Sub Bill 248. This committee should not pass Sub HB 218 without significant revisions. This committee should reference Sub HB 248 to see how Sub HB 218 needs amended.

If Sub HB 218 comes to a vote without the aforementioned revisions, I strongly encourage you to vote against Ohio House Sub Bill 218, which – unamended – would codify discrimination into Ohio law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Vance", written in a cursive style.

Robert Nelson Vance