

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Craig, and honorable members of the Senate General Budget Government Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity and privilege to speak today.

I speak today in opposition to HB 218 for the same reasons that I opposed HB 435 and HB 248, and that is because anti-vaccine voices are the ones calling for this type of legislation. As I said with HB 435, it hurts my soul to know that hours upon hours of committee time is being spent to debate civil rights for anti-vaxxers when legislation for LGBTQ rights that was introduced all the way back in March haven't even had sponsor hearings, let alone proponent and opponent testimony.

I do oppose this bill on the principle that it is undeniably an anti-vax bill, however there are parts of it that could be amended to make it less anti-vax. This bill carves out children's hospital workers or those who work in an intensive care unit, but it does not carve out nursing homes. Nursing homes serve an age group that is most likely to end up in one of those intensive care units should they contract COVID. If my mom had to be in a nursing home I would not feel she was safe if the employees around her were not required to receive the COVID vaccine.

I also feel that if individual employees are allowed to claim a medical exemption from a COVID vaccine, then small business owners should also have a medical exemption from having to employ unvaccinated employees who are claiming the religious or reason of conscience exemption. An amendment of that nature would be a good faith effort to allow small business owners who have pre-existing conditions or are immune compromised the chance to protect themselves and/or somebody they live with such as a spouse or child who is immune compromised.

One of the main provisions in HB 218 that should not be amended is the sunset clause. If I recall correctly it does not sunset quite as soon as HB 435, but I still think the sunset clause is critical. Without it, this bill would go from a mildly anti-vax bill to an extremely anti-vax bill.

I've been researching vaccines and more specifically the anti-vax community for four/five years, so I have to call it like I see it. I've hopefully shared a few ideas that can help make this bill less anti-vax, and also a way to make sure it doesn't become more anti-vax, however in my eyes it is still anti-vax legislation, and as such I must oppose it.

That's my testimony, so I welcome questions at this time.

Thank you,
Sarah Barry