

Chairman Cutrona, Vice Chair Gross, and Members of the House Health Provider Services Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on HB 319, "The Conscientious Right to Refuse."

Hello, my name is Dane Donaldson, a 53-year-old father of two boys, a business owner, and a US Army Veteran. I would like to share our story and explain how this bill would have positively impacted our lives. Our youngest son, Tanner, was born with end-stage renal disease, and we knew that a kidney transplant would be necessary at some point. We had been working with the Cleveland Clinic on this matter. Tanner, who is now 11 years old, was placed on the transplant list at the Cleveland Clinic in October 2017 when he was just 4 years old.

In preparation to be Tanner's living donor, I embarked on a two-year journey to improve my health. I changed my nutrition, increased physical activity, and lost nearly 50 pounds. I made sacrifices, giving up social activities and adhering to a strict diet. Additionally, I found support in a men's Christian Bible study group, which helped me mentally and spiritually. In January 2018, the Cleveland Clinic officially approved me as Tanner's living donor, and we finally had a clear plan.

The doctors and I agreed that Tanner would receive a kidney before needing dialysis, so I had to maintain my health in a "donation ready state." This involved regular testing at the Cleveland Clinic every 12-18 months. We were committed to this process, knowing that it would greatly benefit Tanner's transplant outcome.

However, in October 2021, we received a generic letter from the Cleveland Clinic stating that anyone who had not taken the new experimental COVID vaccine would be removed as a living donor. This news turned our world upside down. We urgently requested a meeting with the Cleveland Clinic to discuss our concerns, given our religious beliefs, and we even submitted a religious statement for their consideration. Unfortunately, our request was swiftly denied. The Clinic insisted that my only options were to receive one of the three emergency authorized vaccines or be removed from the donor list.

During the meeting, I expressed concerns about the potential risks and complications associated with the experimental vaccine. The Cleveland Clinic representatives could not guarantee that my body would handle the vaccine without any issues. My wife Jennifer even asked directly whether there was a possibility that the vaccine could remove me from the donor list due to a reaction, and the answer was yes, although rare. Given the rarity of Tanner's condition, I couldn't ignore the potential risks.

Despite having already had COVID and recovered well, with a robust natural immune response confirmed by a T-Cell test, the Cleveland Clinic disregarded this information. They insisted that it was either the vaccine or removal from the donor list, regardless of individual circumstances. They even suggested that I find another hospital to remove my kidney and have it transported to the Cleveland Clinic, but I would not be allowed in the operating room without the vaccine. This left me facing an impossible choice: take an experimental vaccine for a virus I had already successfully fought off, with no guarantee of its impact on my health, or risk being unable to donate my kidney to my son.

We were deeply shaken by this situation. Tears rolled down my face as I faced a lose/lose predicament, and it felt unimaginable that this was happening in the United States. We were left

without any advocates from the Cleveland Clinic, despite our eight-and-a-half-year relationship with them. We even offered to draft a legal binding waiver relieving them of any COVID-related liability, but our pleas fell on deaf ears. When I asked what was the risk if I didn't have the shot? Their answer, I could get covid while on the operating table and exposing Tanner. All I kept thinking was I just recovered from Covid, Tanner lives in my home how much more exposure is there? This experience caused immense personal and financial hardship, as we had to change hospitals, undergo new tests, find new surgeons, and bear additional expenses. We are still working to find a solution today.

I can only imagine how much worse this situation would have been if Tanner had needed a transplant at the time this happened. Would we have had to travel to another state or even another country? This committee has the power to prevent other fathers from being placed in such a distressing situation due to their sincerely held religious beliefs.

I urge you to vote YES on HB 319. Thank you for allowing me to share our testimony.

Sincerely- Dane Donaldson

