

June 9, 2024

Chairman Cutrona, Vice Chair Gross, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the Health Provider Services Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide support testimony for HB 319; “The Conscientious Right to Refuse Act.”

America is founded on freedom. As an American, we should never be denied our constitutional right to freedom and to choose what is best for our body. To be denied freedom is to turn our back on what the country stands for. We cannot simply allow these freedoms when it suits us, but we must be allowed freedom even when it's hard.

In November, 2020, I was forced out of my job because I refused the COVID vaccine. I was told that unless I took the vaccine, I would be “let go”. December 31, 2020 would be my last day of employment.

I was an exemplary employee with extremely high reviews and had recently been asked to do a nationwide commercial with one of my patients who I had in Case Management. I worked solely from home and all of my contact with patient's was strictly via phone. I never left my home for work during the pandemic and only missed 1.5 days when I myself was recovering from COVID.

I was encouraged and instructed by my supervisor to apply for a religious exemption and did so, only to be granted a “temporary exemption”. I wasn't sure what that even meant...”temporary exemption.” I reached out to the HR department only to hear nothing back regarding my inquiry. Not a single person from the HR department reached out to me to explain their decision regardless of my many emails requesting a conversation with someone in the department who could give me an answer.

I was denied the ability to work and provide for my family because I refused a vaccine that I did not have confidence in. Even though I had COVID and my body was able to recover, thus building active acquired immunity, I was denied that as “natural vaccination”. As a nurse, I was being asked to forget all I had been taught in Anatomy and Physiology regarding our body's ability to overcome disease with a healthy immune system. I was being asked to forget all I had learned about how we build immunity, and how things like vaccines

can cause more harm, especially when someone had recovered from disease naturally.

When I was pushed out of my position, I lost my insurance benefits which covered me and my husband, I lost the 6.5 years of seniority I had built with this Fortune 500 company. I lost paid vacation and holidays, life insurance and 401k. I scrambled to find work as a nurse and had to take less than ideal jobs just to survive.

In the four years since being pushed out of my WORK FROM HOME job, we have used all of our savings, struggled to pay our bills and had to borrow from my elderly father just to make ends meet.

I had to take a job making \$4 less an hour, no paid vacation, no sick leave and no health insurance. I was forced to find insurance on the Marketplace just to cover myself. The premiums were high and the coverage was subpar.

This job was only part time and making ends meet has been impossible. I found myself in a position financially that I had never been in since becoming a nurse. It is disgusting what was done to my family, all in the name of a useless vaccine.

Being given a temporary religious exemption was an insult. I had not taken a vaccine in over 15 years and have been a Christian, trusting God for my health and healing my entire life. I graduated from a local private Christian school and have attended church my whole life. My father is 83 years old and still assists in pastoring his church. To be granted a temporary religious exemption was more than a slap in the face, and this Fortune 500 company cared nothing about me and forced many of their employees out that year.

They have since lifted the mandate and periodically I check my inbox to see if HR has ever responded to my emails. To date, they have not.

Ohioans should NEVER be forced to go against their religious beliefs. If we allow this to happen, we are no better than a country governed by tyrants.

I urge the committee members to please vote yes on HB 319

Sincerely

Rachell L Huffman