

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.”

This is an extremely important issue to my family. My son was injured by his twelve month pediatric vaccinations. He stopped answering to his name, became an excessively picky eater, started doing odd things like stacking objects, sleep difficulties and an onset of chronic gastro-intestinal problems, chronic upper respiratory infections and terrible environmental allergies, just to list some of his issues. My son is now 28 years old and he does not speak, requires 24/7 care for life, and he also became epileptic at the age of 21. Because of his experiences we have worked with many medical doctors on his ongoing medical issues. We have now properly educated ourselves on the childhood vaccine schedule as we never went into the decision to vaccinate our children from a place of knowledge, but of fear and blind trust. A decision we regret.

When covid came around we knew we would not be taking any vaccine as none of us could risk injury. My husband is the sole provider for our family and I am my son’s primary caregiver. My daughter at the time was working for a large National radio station in Cincinnati. Her employer required that their employees get the covid vaccine. With a history of Bell’s palsy and obvious concerns due to her brother’s history she attempted to get a medical exemption from our family physician. He refused to talk to her and just kept messaging with her through the hospital system portal trying to avoid an actual conversation- he just kept telling her she should get it. When I intervened he agreed to write one BUT he told me he would not be seeing ANYONE in our family after this. He fired us from his practice. What he wrote was simply a joke. Two sentences of nonsense. I know what an actual medical exemption looks like as my son’s neurologist wrote him one. My daughter’s employer rejected what our former doctor provided and she was fired from her job for not taking the covid vaccine. This set her on a very bad path as she struggled to accept being fired for such a reason and scrambling to find employment to be able to pay her bills and live.

We have lost faith in our medical system. Long before covid families like mine have pointed to the childhood vaccine schedule as the initial source of our children's medical and developmental problems. Autism once extremely rare is now said to occur in 1 in 34 children. This is unbelievable to me because I've been watching the numbers climb for over 25 years and all the public health authorities and the American Academy of Pediatrics do is claim that they're getting better at diagnosing it. Meanwhile, how many families are struggling under the emotional and financial strains caused by disabling so many children? Vaccine injuries are not rare- they are rarely acknowledged.

Ohioans should have their right of conscience and religion protected from the medical over-reach of employers or those providing public services. Both the U.S. and Ohio State constitutions address the right of conscious and religious freedom. It is time to make sure that those freedoms are protected at the state level. I urge the committee members to please vote yes on HB 319.

Sincerely,

Andrea Keller

Canfield, Ohio