

**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.”**

All medical interventions have risks, where there is a risk there must be a choice. It is extremely important to me that the right to refuse medical interventions be put into law.

In October of 2005 I suffered a life-altering reaction to a flu shot. I spent 24 days in the hospital paralyzed from the neck down, went to a rehab hospital to learn to walk again, and could not feel my legs for 4 years. Nineteen years later I still suffer from the damage of that shot. My legs simply turn off. I have to stop and sit down wherever I am so I don't fall, even if it is on a city street. In the last 5 years, I have broken my wrist/hand twice when I tried to break a fall. Doctors are still deciding how to treat the nerve damage in my legs and back so this does not continue. For the last year, I have lived with a great deal of pain all caused by a flu shot 19 years ago.

As you know, vaccine manufacturers are not liable for any injuries under the National Vaccine Compensation Program. I filed a case with the program, commonly called vaccine court. The Magistrate conceded my case without trial. My settlement amount was to cover future medical costs.

When the Covid vaccine became available, my employer sent emails suggesting we would be required to get the covid vaccine to remain employed. They were well aware of my vaccine injury. I asked if I would be fired for not getting the vaccine. I never received an answer. They suggested I could file a medical exemption request but were not sure if it would be accepted. I was concerned about losing my health insurance since my vaccine injury bills continue to grow. We were asked to upload our vaccine cards to continue employment and to get a discount on our health insurance.

My husband filed a religious accommodation request with his employer and it was accepted. However, he was no longer allowed to go into the office, travel for business or win performance award trips.

Venues were requesting vaccine cards which obviously I could not produce. I was not allowed to go to medical appointments without the vaccine. Doctors were refusing to see unvaccinated patients. Even churches were asking for parishioners vaccine status.

I wonder what other medical interventions employers might mandate in the future.

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.**