

Testimony of Nathaniel Overmire, DO

In Opposition of House Bill 248

Submitted to the Ohio House Health Committee

June 11, 2021

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony on House Bill 248. My name is Nathaniel Overmire and am a proud osteopathic family physician, practicing in Mansfield, Ohio. As a member of the Ohio Academy of Family Physicians (OAFP) Public Policy Committee, I write to strongly oppose House Bill 248.

Vaccines are safe and effective. They prevent disease and save lives. The lifesaving and cost saving impact that vaccines have made over the last several decades are tremendous. The US Supreme Court has held that the government can compel vaccination to prevent life-threatening contagious disease even in the face of restrictions of liberty. This landmark case in 1905, remains good and intact law today. While all states require children to be vaccinated against certain communicable diseases as a condition for school attendance, there is no current governmental mandate for COVID vaccination. Therefore, the aim of this bill intends to upend years of public health work to improve and sustain childhood immunization coverage. This coverage keeps vaccine preventable disease low. While some private institutions have mandated COVID vaccination, there are no federal or state laws currently mandating such immunization.

Since the introduction of childhood vaccines for diseases such as measles or pertussis, for example, cases and deaths have fallen dramatically. As non-medical opt outs of childhood vaccines rise, we continue to see a resurgence of diseases, like measles, once thought to be eradicated. This puts our vulnerable populations at risk of increased morbidity or even death. While there are legitimate medical opt-outs, non-medical opts are threatening years of public health progress and the safety of vulnerable populations. We must do our part to ensure that people have the facts and that we bust myths regarding safety and efficacy. We have been through this before with the infamous and now debunked claims of a link between vaccines and autism. We should not have to go down that same road again.

We continue to see in study after study, when vaccination rates climb, cases of disease fall. In particular, COVID vaccines are highly effective in preventing hospitalization and death. While the vaccines do not completely eliminate all transmission, there is up to a 94% reduction of transmission in recent studies. We will continue to study the data and ask critical questions to

ensure the public understands the risks and benefits prior to receiving vaccination. HB 248 goes too far, creates a solution with no problem, and dismantles much of the work done in public health. I stand in solidarity with many like-minded family medicine physicians, osteopathic physicians, healthcare workers throughout Ohio, and our patients who understand that vaccines work and are effective.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in opposition of HB 248.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Overmire, DO