



HB 248 Opponent Testimony to the House Health Committee

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chairman Holmes, Ranking Member Russo:

The Ohio Osteopathic Association (OOA) represents approximately 5,000 actively practicing osteopathic physicians (DOs) and more than 1,000 osteopathic medical students. DOs represent about 1 in 6 of the total physicians practicing in Ohio and more than a quarter of the state's family physicians. I am writing on behalf of these doctors and students to oppose HB 248.

As a profession, we support science and evidence based medicine. The science shows vaccinations save lives and and protect communities.

The United States has a long-standing system in place that ensures all vaccines are as safe as possible. Vaccines, like any medication, may cause side effects. But a decision not to immunize can involve dangerous or deadly risk.

HB 248 has been framed as a COVID-19 bill, but in truth it has a much broader impact. If passed, this legislation has the potential to reverse decades of immunity from life-threatening diseases like measles, mumps, hepatitis, meningitis, and polio. Countless CDC statistics illustrate the dramatic decline in vaccine-preventable diseases when compared with the pre-vaccine era.

Any attempt to restrict or decrease vaccine accountability and oversight—especially in patient care settings—would have a devastating impact on public health. Quite simply, vaccines are a life saver.

If we look at COVID-19 vaccinations specifically, it is the same story. Millions of people in the United States have received these vaccines. They are safe and effective—and the science shows they are working. They are keeping vaccinated people from getting seriously ill and dying. According to the Ohio Department of Health, approximately 99% of all recent COVID hospitalizations in Ohio have been among those who aren't fully vaccinated.

As a nephrologist in Columbus, I have seen the damage COVID-19 can do to the kidneys. I've seen many patients who have suffered from COVID-19 related kidney failure. In the group of those patients that have required renal replacement therapy/dialysis, the majority have not survived.

Patients on dialysis, or with chronic kidney disease, or other severe chronic medical conditions, are at higher risk for more serious COVID-19 illness. That's why it is so important that we do not weaken our vaccination laws and erode our public health infrastructure.

Reject HB 248 to protect the vitality of Ohio's children and families and avoid disastrous consequences for the future of our state. Thank you to the House Health Committee for its consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry L. Wehrum D.O." in a cursive script.

Henry L. Wehrum, DO
President
Ohio Osteopathic Association