



## **HB 248 Opponent Testimony to the House Health Committee**

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chairman Holmes, Ranking Member Russo:

I am writing today on behalf the osteopathic physicians and students of the Ohio Osteopathic Association to express opposition to House Bill 248.

The Ohio Osteopathic Association (OOA) represents approximately 5,000 actively practicing osteopathic physicians (DOs) in the state of Ohio 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. Osteopathic physicians provide distinctive care through a holistic approach to wellness that recognizes the person is a unit of body, mind, and spirit.

Simply put, vaccinations save lives.

HB 248 would weaken our vaccination laws and erode our public health infrastructure. This bill is framed as a COVID-19 bill, but in truth 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. In fact, it is precisely because of vaccinations, that many of us have never seen a child with polio or measles or mumps. I feel fortunate that in my greater than ten years of practicing medicine, I have never seen a case of polio.

The United States has a long-standing safety system in place that ensures vaccines are as safe as possible. Vaccines, like any medication, can cause mild side effects. But a decision not to immunize can involve dangerous or deadly risk—and not only to the patient but also to families and communities. COVID-19 has been devastating. Ohio deaths from COVID-19 has surpassed 20,000 in a little over a year—a greater number than the population of six counties in Ohio.

As physicians, we believe in science and evidence based medicine. We feel very strongly that vaccinations protect communities.

The OOA urges you to 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.

*Jennifer L. Gwilym, DO, FACOFP, FAAFP, CS*

Jennifer L. Gwilym, DO  
Health Policy Chair  
Ohio Osteopathic Association