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Senator Peterson and members of the General Budget Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to present Opponent Testimony on HB 218

I am a retired Pediatrician with more than 30 years of service with Nationwide Children's Hospital. I am also current co-chair of the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Advocacy Committee.

This legislation is a part of an effort over the past several months to promote "medical freedom". The perception and practical impact of this legislation is to dilute vaccination efforts. This bill is not a pro-freedom bill but a Pro-Covid bill.

Protection of an employer's rights to make decisions in the best interest of their employees and those we serve cannot be overstated. It is imperative that employers, including hospitals and schools, have the right to implement workplace policies they believe are in the best interest of their patients, students, employees, and communities. The bill has exemptions for ICU's and children's hospitals to protect their vulnerable populations. Pediatrician's Offices care for vulnerable children who deserve a safe place to receive treatment. All clinics and physician offices should be allowed to provide a safe place to treat their patients.

Although the bill allows an entity to require the COVID-19 vaccine, the exemptions are so broad that anyone can opt out with minimal effort. In states where easy exemption was allowed for the measles vaccine the rate of the disease went out the roof and states had to reestablish a more stringent policy.

As medical professionals, we support vaccination for our patients; additionally, we support required vaccination for ourselves and all associates of healthcare organizations. There is an ethical commitment of all health care workers to prioritize patients' needs and take all steps necessary to ensure their health and well-being. Vaccination is a logical requirement for those of us who choose to work in healthcare.

Now is not the time to water-down the protection that immunizations, masks, and social distancing provide. It's time for the leaders of Ohio to support laws whose goals are a healthy population, an immunized population. To continue to support legislation that produces an under-immunized population will assure that this pandemic continues on for years instead of being just a memory.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.