

Opponent Testimony

Franklin County Public Health

House Bill 435

Chairman Stein, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee:

My name is Joe Mazzola. I currently serve as Health Commissioner at Franklin County Public Health. As a member of the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners (AOHC) this testimony is submitted in opposition to House Bill 435.

As proposed, the bill imposes prohibitions on private businesses and other entities across the State of Ohio related to vaccination to prevent COVID-19. We believe that the business community should not only have the option to require this highly effective and safe vaccine for their employees but should be incentivized to do so. We have seen a strong commitment from our private businesses and public organizations in Franklin County taking a proactive approach to require vaccinations for their employees. In our view, this demonstrates not only their concern for the economic success, but also the health and safety of their employees, customers and our community.

Further, the timing of this proposal is extremely short-sighted, given that Franklin County, Ohio and the nation are just beginning to see a downward trend in cases and hospitalizations from the latest surge of the Delta variant. In order to prevent future surges and successfully and permanently emerge from the constant impact of this virus, we must continue to increase the number of Ohioans protected by vaccination.

Vaccinations are our best tool to ultimately control the spread of communicable disease. Franklin County Public Health, like all local health departments across the state, has been working, along with our community partners, since February 2020 to gain the upper hand against the virus that causes COVID-19. We ask for your help by encouraging vaccination, rather than promoting broad and wide opportunities for our citizens to be exempted from vaccination requirements aimed at promoting the health and safety of our citizens.

For these reasons, we strongly oppose HB 435 and we ask that you not move the bill forward.

As always, we welcome the opportunity to participate dialogue with the General Assembly to discuss proposals, after-action reviews and public health modernization efforts to not only bring this virus under control but also be prepared for the next public health emergency.

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