



780 East Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

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Chairman Young, Vice-Chair DeVitis, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee, I write today in opposition to House Bill 170. This legislation would prohibit an employer from taking an adverse employment action against a person who has not been or will not be vaccinated against influenza.

I currently serve as the Vice President for Quality and Patient Safety at Riverside Methodist Hospital, a 600 bed community teaching hospital in Columbus. While my current duties are administrative in overseeing the quality and safety work at Riverside, my clinical training is as an intensive care unit (ICU) and pulmonary (lung) medicine physician.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that everyone over the age of 6 months should receive the flu vaccine each year. Why is the flu vaccine vital? First, and probably most obviously, it can keep you from getting sick from flu. Protecting yourself from flu also protects the people around you who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness.

The flu vaccine can also help protect people who are at greater risk of getting seriously ill from flu, like older adults and people with chronic health conditions. It reduces the risk of more serious flu outcomes, like hospitalizations and deaths.

As a healthcare provider, I also have a responsibility to keeping my patients safe from harm – including harm that may be associated with healthcare. OhioHealth has had a concerted effort to reduce harm associated with healthcare, including an aggressive campaign for hand hygiene and successful reduction in hospital-acquired infections. Most healthy adults can infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick. Considering the frail population we often serve, it is imperative that healthcare workers be appropriately vaccinated. Vaccination among healthcare workers is consistent with our roles as stewards of community health. For every 15 healthcare providers who receive the influenza vaccination, one fewer person in the community will contract an influenza-like illness.

Consistent with recommendations from the CDC, which states that healthcare workers get vaccinated annually against influenza, OhioHealth requires all of our associates to receive the vaccination each year. Exemptions are made for religious or certain medical reasons; however, both require the associate to complete paperwork requesting exemption. In the case of the request for medical exemption, a physician or medical practitioner must sign off on the request and specify the reason for possible exemption. Exemptions based on minor health issues or personal objection are not approved. We have found that very few healthcare workers require an exemption. We have found even fewer who are unwilling to receive the vaccine.

**A FAITH-BASED, NOT-FOR-PROFIT HEALTHCARE SYSTEM**

RIVERSIDE METHODIST HOSPITAL + GRANT MEDICAL CENTER + DOCTORS HOSPITAL + GRADY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL  
DUBLIN METHODIST HOSPITAL + DOCTORS HOSPITAL-NELSONVILLE + HARDIN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL  
MARION GENERAL HOSPITAL + REHABILITATION HOSPITAL + O'BLENESS HOSPITAL + MEDCENTRAL MANSFIELD HOSPITAL  
MEDCENTRAL SHELBY HOSPITAL + WESTERVILLE MEDICAL CAMPUS + HEALTH AND SURGERY CENTERS + PRIMARY AND SPECIALTY CARE  
URGENT CARE + WELLNESS + HOSPICE + HOME CARE + 28,000 PHYSICIANS, ASSOCIATES & VOLUNTEERS

Very simply, OhioHealth's policy is based on recommendations by the CDC and the Joint Commission and is done thoughtfully for the protection of our patients and associates. HB 170 would needlessly imperil that policy, so I respectfully ask that you oppose its passage.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James O'Brien". The signature is stylized and cursive.

James O'Brien, M.D.  
Vice President, Quality & Patient Safety  
OhioHealth Riverside Methodist Hospital