

HB0699 - Proof of Vaccination - FWA
FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT
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Testimony to House Health and Government Operations Committee

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Delegate Pena-Melnyk and Honored Committee Members:

I am a cardiologist practicing with Johns Hopkins Medicine in Baltimore with over 18 years of experience caring for thousands of patients throughout the state of Maryland. During the pandemic in 2020, I cared for patients with covid-19 in ICUs and hospital wards, and I understand what a serious illness it was in vulnerable patients at that time. I also participated in the health care covid vaccination campaign in January 2021 and personally vaccinated about 200 of my colleagues. I received three vaccine doses myself in 2021. I am testifying on my own behalf.

Much has changed since 2020 and 2021. The omicron variant of covid is less morbid and less lethal, and at least 90% of the US population has had covid at least once. With the addition of vaccination, the entire US population is protected by some form of natural and/or vaccine induced immunity. Covid has not been a significant issue in hospital operations in Maryland in many months.

In this context, covid vaccine mandates no longer have any sound scientific or public health rationale. It is widely acknowledged that they have little effect in reducing acquisition or spread of infection, and they produce immunity that wanes rapidly. The virus is continually mutating and evolving to evade vaccine immunity. Many countries in Europe are actually abandoning covid vaccination for healthy people under the age of 50 years.

Free and voluntary informed consent is the single most important principle of medical ethics. It should be breached only in extraordinary circumstances and when the therapy in question has an unequivocal, strong, and necessary public benefit. This is clearly no longer the case with covid vaccines, which have uncommon but undeniable potential serious adverse effects. I have seen several cases of vaccine injury myself. My 16 year old son had a severe reactogenic response to his second vaccine and will definitely not be getting another one.

In this context, covid vaccination should be a medical decision made between patient and clinician based on informed consent and shared decision-making and on assessment of risks and benefits in individual circumstances. Continued mandates make such nuanced medical decisions impossible.

Covid vaccine mandates have caused great social and economic strife in the US, and they have exacerbated the workforce crisis, which has affected health care settings most severely. The mandates are obsolete and should be abandoned, most especially for college students, who are at

negligible risk of severe illness or death and who have overwhelmingly acquired natural immunity from previous infection.

Some college students are still being forced to take risks of adverse reactions from covid vaccines as a condition of starting or finishing their college education. Please consider amendments to HB699, which language includes: "Public Institutions of Higher Education may not require an individual to provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19 as part of an application for admission or as a condition of enrollment."

I hope that you will also give HB699, as amended, a favorable report. Thank you for reviewing my testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph E. Marine". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "M".

Joseph E. Marine, MD