

Dear Chair Davis, Vice-Chair Dumais, and members of the Economic Matters Committee,

I am writing today to request a favorable report for HB1171. It is imperative that Maryland citizens maintain the right to choose whether or not they wish to receive the Covid-19 vaccine, and no citizen should be in a position where they have to weigh the risks that the vaccine may pose to their health, against the threat of losing their job.

As it stands today, with the Emergency Use Authorization granted for the vaccines currently available, these products have not been thoroughly tested for safety and are not yet fully authorized by the FDA. These vaccines were rushed to market, using mRNA technology, which has never before been used in the production of vaccines. We do not yet have a full understanding of how these products and this new technology will affect health outcomes for those who have received them. It is one thing to measure reactions in the short term, but we simply have not had the time and do not have the data to understand the potential long term consequences. If a recipient suffers an adverse reaction in the short or long term, no one is liable. As part of the emergency use authorization, the pharmaceutical companies bringing these products to market are not liable for injury from the products. As an additional measure, the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program that would ordinarily be called upon to determine whether a person qualifies for compensation for vaccine injury, and which would pay out said compensation, is not applicable to Covid-19 vaccines. No one is liable for injury, should it occur.

I believe that every citizen should have the opportunity to weigh the potential risks and benefits of Covid-19 vaccination, and determine for themselves whether they wish to receive the vaccine based on their individual circumstances. Personally, I wish to have the freedom to abstain. I have a rare and complex autoimmune condition- Idiopathic thrombocytopenia, in which my platelets can drop dangerously low and I must be monitored to ensure that they are remaining high enough that I'm not in danger of dying from spontaneous hemorrhage. Not only have these vaccines not been tested on people with autoimmune conditions, but there have been reports of death post vaccination from an acute onset of this very condition, in people with no previous history of it. For me, with my particular condition, I believe the risks of the vaccine outweigh the benefits. We have increasingly more effective treatment for Covid-19, but there is limited opportunity to intervene with this condition if it is severe in presentation and doesn't respond to blood transfusion. I do not want my employment to be conditional on whether or not I am willing to take this risk, and I do not believe it is just or ethical to put myself or others with concerns about their health and safety in that position. We do not know yet whether receiving a Covid-19 vaccine prevents a recipient from transmitting the virus, all we know so far is that it seems to mitigate severity for those who do catch the virus, rendering it a questionable public health measure, and more a matter of personal protection. As such, it should entirely be a matter of personal choice.

We need our economy to recover. Covid-19 has taken a devastating toll. If people who have legitimate concerns and wish to abstain from an experimental pharmaceutical product then have to risk unemployment to have the freedom to make that choice, the economy will further suffer as people side with their health as a priority. I stand in favor of HB1171 and implore you to do the same.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Marina Gan