

In Opposition to HB21-1191
Prohibit Discrimination Covid-19 Vaccine Status

My name is Tom Perille. I am a physician and President of Democrats for Life of Colorado (DFLCO).

The most important role of government is to provide for the security and safety of its citizens. HB21-1191 would have the Colorado legislature abrogate that responsibility and place the health and life of Coloradans in jeopardy. For this reason, DFLCO strongly opposes HB21-1191.

DFLCO promotes a consistent life ethic. We believe that every human life from conception till natural death has inherent dignity and value regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, physical/cognitive abilities, ethnicity/race, religious beliefs, or financial means. There shouldn't be any circumstance in which Coloradans could place their own desire for personal bodily autonomy above their fellow Coloradans' right to health/life.

The Covid 19 vaccine is a safe and effective strategy to prevent severe morbidity and mortality related to Covid 19. The risk of dying from Covid is between 0.7 to 2% and varies by age and comorbidities. The most vulnerable Coloradans are at the greatest risk. The Covid vaccines are extremely effective in reducing asymptomatic and symptomatic disease (~ 91-95%) as well as hospitalizations (~ 97%) and death (~97%).¹ This alone should be enough to motivate Coloradans to be vaccinated. However, the rationale for broad community-based vaccination goes beyond the benefit accrued to the individual vaccinated. By being vaccinated, the individual decreases the rate of transmission of Covid 19 in the community and decreases the likelihood that more readily transmissible and lethal coronavirus variants develop. To put it plainly, when an individual is vaccinated, they reduce the burden of Covid in the community which translates into improved health/economic outcomes for their fellow Coloradans. Lives are saved. This is among the most basic and most efficacious public health tool available. It prevents our ERs and hospitals from being overwhelmed and avoid a public health crisis.

Covid 19 is orders of magnitude worse than influenza. Why is it that we are debating whether the government or private employers/health care organizations can impose disincentives for those who refuse Covid vaccination when we already allow disincentives (or "discrimination") for those who refuse influenza vaccination?

And there is no major religion that prohibits vaccination. Most religions view vaccination as an obligation.² The risk of significant morbidity from the vaccine is exceedingly rare and much less than contracting Covid 19. The risk of dying from the vaccine has not been established with the mRNA vaccines and is only plausibly linked to the Johnson & Johnson vaccine (through thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome), particularly for women under age 50.³

The Colorado Assembly should be encouraging all Coloradans to be vaccinated except for those with a true religious or medical contraindication. You should not endorse bills that diminish that goal. Please vote no on HB21-1191. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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President, Democrats for Life of Colorado

References:

- 1) Haas EJ, et.al., Impact and effectiveness of mRNA BNT162b2 vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 infections and COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths following a nationwide vaccination campaign in Israel: an observational study using national surveillance data. Lancet May 5 2021; S0140-6736(21)00947-8.
- 2) Vaccination and Religion. Wikipedia. Downloaded May 11, 2021 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaccination_and_religion.
- 3) Selected Adverse Events Reported after COVID-19 Vaccination. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Downloaded May 11, 2021 at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/adverse-events.html#:~:text=Anaphylaxis%20after%20COVID%2D19%20vaccination%20is%20rare.&text=Anaphylaxis%20after%20COVID%2D19%20vaccination%20is%20rare%20and%20occurred%20in,on%20events%20reported%20to%20VAERS>.