



Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Testimony by Jimmy Widmer, MD
Senate Bill 7 by Sen. Mayes Middleton (R-Galveston)
October 10, 2023

Honorable Chair Kolkhorst, Vice-Chair Perry, and Committee Members:

My name is Dr. Jimmy Widmer. I practice internal medicine in Temple. On behalf of the Texas Medical Association (TMA), the Texas Pediatric Society (TPS), and our collectively more than 57,000 members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

TMA and TPS respectfully **oppose** Senate Bill 7 as written. However, we would like to work with the bill author and this committee, not to impose any universal COVID-19 vaccination requirements, but to address reasonable exceptions for patient safety.

COVID-19 still disproportionately affects patients who are immunocompromised, elderly, or suffer from complex medical conditions, regardless of their vaccination status. A U.S. study showed that even when vaccinated, immunocompromised patients have a 40% higher risk of being admitted to the ICU and 87% higher risk of dying in the hospital from COVID-19 than the general population.¹

It is important for patients – including vulnerable patients seeking care from their physicians – to receive care in a healthy environment that minimizes disease risk. Physicians and health care facilities need to have flexibility to act in the best interests of their patients and staff. To that end, and consistent with existing Texas statutes on required vaccinations, we ask that physician offices and health care facilities be allowed the freedom to set their own policies on the COVID-19 vaccination of their employees and contractors, provided those policies include exemptions for reasons of conscience and where medically contra-indicated.

As physicians, it is important that our patients have a safe place to receive medical care. Doctors' offices in Texas should have the freedom to set their own vaccination policies in alignment with the best interests of the patients they serve, in balance with the medical and conscience needs of their employees and contractors.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

¹ Singson JRC, et al. [Factors Associated with Severe Outcomes Among Immunocompromised Adults Hospitalized for COVID-19 - COVID-NET, 10 States, March 2020-February 2022](#). MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2022 Jul 8;71(27):878-884. doi: 10.15585/mmwr.mm7127a3. PMID: 35797216; PMCID: PMC9290380.