

TO: House Committee on Workforce, Trades and Talent

FROM: Brad Williams, Vice President, Government Relations

RE: Opposition to House Bill 4471

DATE: August 19, 2021

Thank you Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Brad Williams, I am the Vice President of Government Relations at the Detroit Regional Chamber. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this most important matter. The Chamber and its member companies understand the emotion behind this issue but are firmly opposed to this direction. In the view of the Detroit Regional Chamber, the third largest chamber representing private industry in the nation, this represents the type of big government overreach many of the proponents of this legislation have long railed against and attempts to implement a one-size fits all solution to the thousands of businesses across the state.

There are good employers requiring vaccines and masks, there are other good employers who leave the choice to individuals. The best employers value the safety of their employees above everything else and will make decisions that balance the need to keep their employees safe and the need to attract top notch talent to their offices and shop floors. When it comes to health and safety, employers look to regulators like MIOSHA to set a basic standard of safety and allow employers to make the choice to go beyond those standards as needs arise. Long standing conservative governance principles has been for the Federal Government to set basic standards, have state, then local governments augment those Federal standards to suit local needs – and then allow individual businesses to go further as their situation and competitive circumstances deem prudent.

Every business I have walked into this summer has a help wanted sign. Signing bonuses and wage increases are becoming common place to try and grow our talent pool. I am confident the majority businesses in your district(s) are talking about their labor shortage and not vaccine mandates. But the labor shortage and vaccines are intertwined. In June, the Chamber released a statewide public policy poll that among other things looked at Michigan voters' priorities for the coming months when it looked like we were at the end of the pandemic.

We discovered that even when enhanced unemployment benefits end next month, our labor shortage is likely to continue. We had a labor shortage before the pandemic struck, and according to the Chamber's statewide polling released in June, 4.2% of Michigan workers have left the labor force during the pandemic and do not have plans to return. These workers are largely older and female. While there are multiple reasons for their decision to leave the workforce, health and safety are among the prime reasons. In other words, Michigan has a chunk of workers sitting idle because they do not feel the work environment is safe enough for them.

The free market works – for both businesses and their employees. Businesses that implement requirements that some employees object to, those employees will go to new employers with policies that best suit their values. Likewise, if employees think their employer is not properly caring for their health and safety, they will find new employment with an employer they are more comfortable with.

July 14, 2021

Given the competitiveness of today's labor market – with employers anxious to hire at all levels – very few people will be unemployed long.

Let me reiterate, that the Chamber is not arguing for or against vaccine and mask mandates, but we are arguing for vaccines because it is the only way out of the pandemic and endless battle against variants, and we are pro free market for both employers and employees. This proposed legislation solves a problem that does not exist and replaces the independent judgement of business owners to respond to their employees, customers and other unique circumstances with a top-down, one-size-fits-all decree from Lansing. Employers do not relish being a part of their employee's private lives any more than is necessary, but their primary responsibility is to the safety of their customers and team members. If one of those team members is not keeping their team members safe, sometimes the employer needs to step in for the good of the entire team and as private entities, that is their choice, not the Legislature's.

We encourage you to explore ways to help bring our members employees safely back to the workplace with carrots as opposed to this proposed stick. Earlier this summer, the Chamber proposed incentives for small employers that can't afford the leave time or pop-up clinic to get 1 million Michiganders vaccinated using federal funds. If policy makers have other creative ideas that will get your vaccine hesitant constituents to move our vaccine rate towards herd immunity by choice, I'll speak for Chamber businesses and say we are ready to help. But Chamber members are looking for partners in navigating out of the pandemic and its variants, restoring our social and economic lives to something that looks like "normal" and creating an environment where all Michiganders feel comfortable doing the things they did before COVID-19 came to our shores.



TO: Members of the House Committee on Workforce, Trades and Talent

FROM: Business Leaders for Michigan, Detroit Regional Chamber, Grand Rapids Area Chamber, Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, Michigan Chamber of Commerce, Michigan Manufacturers Association, Small Business Association for Michigan

DATE: August 18, 2021

RE: House Bill 4471

Representing the largest business organizations in Michigan, collectively representing Michigan's largest and smallest private sector employers, we write to state our collective opposition to House Bill 4471. Each of our organizations has individual perspectives on numerous issues including those concerning COVID-19 and overall workplace safety. It is most important for members of the House Workforce, Trades, and Talent Committee to notice, however, that we are unanimous in our conviction that House Bill 4471 represents and overreach of government authority into the operations of private industry.

Michigan employers value the health and safety of our employees and customers above everything else. Not only is it the right thing to do, but we must in order to compete globally. Additionally, we have a legal obligation under the Michigan Occupational, Safety and Health Act (MIOSHA) to keep workers safe. We hear from many of our employees of their concerns about being safe in the workplace and this concern is a critical factor for them when making the decision to return to work. For us to meet the demands placed upon us by the state government and to meet the needs of our employees, we must have the flexibility under the law to find the

best solution for each company. The best way to give us this flexibility is to limit the interference and mandates from the state government as much as possible.

Each employer should be allowed the flexibility to make judgements about safety, how we attract workers, and how we operate our businesses. Public policymakers should leave decisions regarding conditions of employment where they belong, with private business owners.