

**Committees:**

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77 South High St.  
Ohio House of Representatives  
13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215-6111  
Email: [rep76@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:rep76@ohiohouse.gov)  
Website: [house.state.oh.us](http://house.state.oh.us)

**Diane V. Grendell, State Representative**  
**Ohio's 76<sup>th</sup> House District**

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Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the Ohio House State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on my legislation, House Bill 624, the Truth in COVID-19 Statistics Bill. This important bill seeks to address specifics surrounding the daily and weekly figures relating to COVID-19 that have been released from the Ohio Department of Health.

We are facing a historic and unprecedented time in history as we deal with the challenges of COVID-19 and I do think it's important that Ohioans receive clarity on how these coronavirus figures are being compiled by ODH. As these numbers are driving vital health, economic policy, and livelihood decisions, it's crucial that we understand where these numbers derived from and that they are clear for the people of Ohio so that good decisions can be made

The major problems with the reporting of data concerning COVID-19 by the Ohio Department of Health are that the reporting has been one-sided and woefully incomplete. Only the data that promotes fear and despair – confirmed cases, hospitalizations, deaths – has been reported by the Ohio Department of Health. What has not been publicly reported is the other half of the story:

- The number of confirmed cases that did not require any medical care;
- The number of patients who were treated and released from the hospital;
- The number of individuals who tested negative;
- The number of deaths that did not involve nursing home residents or prison inmates.
- Number of individuals with contributing factors such as
  - Diabetes
  - Heart Disease
  - High Blood Pressure
  - Pulmonary Issues

In fact, it took a recent effort by an investigative reporter to obtain the fact that over 70% of Ohio COVID deaths involved long term care facilities.

While we mourn every death in Ohio, the sad truth is that on an average day we lose 330 Ohioans. An average of 117,000 Ohioans die on average every year. Until COVID-19 came along, those daily death totals were unreported. The non-COVID daily deaths still go unreported. On average, Ohio is seeing 41 deaths per day relating to COVID-19 (under current reporting standards). More Ohioans under 50 years old have died from the seasonal flu.

The one-sided nature of the ODH COVID reporting has created an atmosphere of fear for a virus with a 99% survivability rate. Without knowing the full picture, many still are afraid to leave their homes. There are multiple credible reports that individuals suffering heart attacks or strokes would not call for an

ambulance because they were afraid of catching COVID-19 if they went to a hospital. The fear of COVID-19 was greater than the certainty of death or permanent disability. The Chief of Staff of University Hospitals Geauga says the seasonal flu is a bigger danger to Ohioans under 50 years of old.

House Bill 624 simply requires that the Ohio Department of Health provides Ohioans with the full story – all of the facts – good and bad, when disseminating information on COVID-19.

Ohioans have a right to these facts so that individual Ohioans can make informed decisions in their daily lives based on facts, not fear.

Providing Ohioans with only selective facts is not responsible reporting. Ohioans are entitled to know the truth...the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

This legislation would require daily figures to include the number of tests conducted each day, number of positive tests, and the number of negative tests. This data would be presented in the form of a chart or table, classified by ZIP code. Also included in the information would be the number of individuals who are hospitalized each day as well as the current hospitalizations numbers. This data would include whether the deaths were solely as a result of COVID-19, highlighting those who died with a positive COVID test that had additional complication factors (along with what those factors are), and the age range of deaths.

Boards of health, health authorities or officials, health care providers, and coroners or medical examiners shall report to the Department of Health all of this information, as well as:

*-Whether the individual tested resides in a congregate setting, such as a nursing home, residential care facility, hospital, or prison and, if so, identification of the congregate setting.*

Entities listed above shall promptly update its report to the Department with all of the following information:

*-If the reporter is a hospital, the date of admission to the hospital for the treatment of COVID-19 and the date of discharge or date of death, as applicable, shall be reported;*

*-Each death resulting from COVID-19, the date of the death, the age of the deceased, and whether the death was attributable solely to COVID-19 or there were additional complication factors, and, if there were, identification of the complication factors.*

All of these reporting requirements shall apply when the Department of Health releases information related to cases of COVID-19.

The Department of Health also shall release COVID-19 infection rates for congregate settings such as nursing homes, residential care facilities, hospitals, and prisons.

The Department of Health shall release all supporting information and documents, including margin of error, with respect to any and all models concerning COVID-19. The Department shall release any adjustments to the modeling projections.

Ohioans deserve to view the whole picture about this virus. To do so, there must be accurate, concise, complete, and valuable data that is easily accessible to them. This legislation is important in

granting Ohioans this ability. Due to this fact, the bill includes an emergency clause to enact this immediately into law pending its successful passage. I hope that you will support House Bill 624, the Truth in COVID-19 Statistics Bill. Thank you chairman, vice chair, ranking member, and members of the committee for inviting me here today and for the consideration.

When it comes to COVID-19 reporting, Ohioans are entitled to all the facts. Then, Ohioans can make responsible and informed decisions for themselves and their families.

I will take any questions you may have on this legislation.

