



**Opponent Testimony of Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund**  
**House Bill 671- Health Orders (As Introduced)**  
**Presented to the House State & Local Government Committee**  
**June 8, 2020**

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the House State & Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present opponent testimony of House Bill 671 (“HB671”). My name is Todd Supeck and I am the Chairman of the Medina County Board of Health and I speak on behalf of my fellow Board of Health members.

The state in which we find our world right now is one none of us could have imagined. I have served on the local board of health since 2004 alongside six other members, two of which have served since 1994. We represent all sectors of Medina County and various elected officials appoint all but one of us. Our District Licensing Council representative, in accordance with ORC 3709.41, is appointed by other Health Department licensed entities. I share this to remind you that we answer to our local community. We are our local community. We own businesses that were negatively affected by this coronavirus pandemic. We have friends, neighbors, customers, and patients who were negatively affected by the closure of business and others by coronavirus itself. We take our role very seriously and no order made by our health department is done lightly.

There is displeasure over our current state and concern for what happens next. I understand that, but do not believe that the change you seek is met by damaging board of health. In the Ohio House 2020 Economic Recovery Task Force you repeatedly heard your fellow legislators urging business owners to talk with their local health departments. They stated many times that the local departments were willing to work with them, which I know to be excellent advice.

The Medina County Board of Health **strongly opposes** HB671 because it curbs the ability of local boards of health to protect the citizens within its jurisdiction in an emergency caused by an epidemic of a contagious disease like the current COVID-19 crisis. Requiring a local board of health to seek the approval of the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) violates the very idea of home rule. We fail to see how taking our local interests and placing them before a panel of legislators from other parts of the state is a better form of decision making during an emergency. In this current crisis our Health Commissioner and department have been repeatedly praised for working with local entities and having a thoughtful, measured approach to all matters.

This bill seeks to limit the effectiveness of any epidemic related emergency orders issued by a local board of health to not more than 14 days, unless extended by JCARR. Given the timing of orders and the

meeting of JCARR, there could be lapses of several weeks. We have seen the difference just a day has meant in the control of nursing home outbreaks of COVID-19. Decisive action, not action weighted by governmental bureaucracy, could be needed. I cannot anticipate what this current pandemic may or may not bring, or what another outbreak might do. What I do know is that local citizens have trusted local boards of health to act. Our elected officials have appointed us, and we serve with integrity. Our friends, neighbors, clients and patients have trusted us to act using our public health knowledge, and we have done so.

There are opportunities for the General Assembly to be involved in guiding how Ohio protects Ohioans through the COVID-19 pandemic and the local and statewide economic recession that looms. However, inserting an additional layer of government during an emergency is not the answer.

Thank you for considering our position and perspective.

Final draft