

Good afternoon, Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee. Thank you for allowing my sponsor testimony for House Concurrent Resolution 28, which denounces all discrimination resulting from COVID-19.

Whether you realize it or not, we have all benefitted from the contributions Asian Ohioans make to our state. If you've been to a restaurant, visited the doctor's office, shopped for groceries, had your nails done, or been to countless other businesses here in Ohio, you have seen the great work Asian Ohioans do for our state each and every day.

I am honored to represent House District 12, which has the third highest Asian population in the State of Ohio. Chinatown in Cleveland is home to some of the best, most authentic restaurants and businesses in the state. Like the rest of Ohio, House District 12 has been hit hard by the pandemic. However, due to the false information and propaganda about the coronavirus, stigmatization and discrimination have made these challenging times even more difficult for Asian Americans.

In my district, constituents have reached out to me, letting me know of the physical destruction of businesses in Asian-concentrated areas due to the high levels of xenophobia that have resulted from the stigmatization of the coronavirus. This is absolutely unacceptable.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the spread of the coronavirus is not connected to a person's race or ethnicity. However, the World Health Organization (WHO), recognizes that due to the uncertainty of this new disease, it is subject to stigmatization which disproportionately impacts people of color. In the case of the coronavirus, the CDC reports that Asian Americans are "especially vulnerable to stigmatization due to COVID-19."

The stigmatization and discrimination that results from the coronavirus can have negative health effects. The fear of stigmatization can lead people to hide their illness or not immediately seek medical treatment. Additionally, stigmatization can result in the denial of healthcare, education, housing, employment, and physical violence.

The stigmatization of the coronavirus can actually lead to continuing the spread of the virus. In the face of the worst public health and economic crisis Ohioans have faced in decades, our constituents are expecting us to work for them. As legislators, it is our duty to ensure we keep Ohio's Promise of guaranteeing all Ohioans can feel safe and secure in our state.

We cannot be an Ohio that allows this behavior to occur. And, because we know it is happening, we must take a stand against it. We have a responsibility to speak out and advocate on behalf of people who are experiencing stigma as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What this resolution would do is acknowledge this responsibility we have as legislators in the 133rd Ohio General Assembly and denounce all forms of discrimination as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for allowing my sponsor testimony for House Concurrent Resolution 28 and I welcome any questions the Committee has.