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Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and Members of the Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform 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.

In March, ODH told Ohioans that we were going to experience a plague of biblical proportions with 10,000 Ohioans being infected daily by mid-April. Ohio hospitals were going to overrun with COVID patients. This modeling was influenced by college epidemiologist Neil Ferguson, who modeled the COVID-19 outbreak. Ferguson's model became the point of reference for leaders across the globe, influencing lockouts and sheltering policies. Ferguson himself backtracked on his model's accuracy just weeks later after the projections tanked.

To this day, 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 daily deaths caused by COVID (the cumulative number is scarier, the actual daily number is not);
- 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, false positives, and duplicate numbers;
- The number of deaths that did not involve nursing home residents or prison inmates. (CONGREGATE)
- Number of individuals with contributing factors such as
 - Diabetes

- Heart Disease
- High Blood Pressure
- Pulmonary Issues
- Obesity

In fact, as of November 17th, over 70% of Ohio COVID deaths involved congregate settings.

While we mourn every death in Ohio, the sad truth is that on an average day we lose 330 Ohioans, and 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. Ohio's most recent COVID mortality data has shown that 5,589 Ohioans have passed away from COVID since 2/1/20, while 101,512 have passed away from other causes (per the CDC). The daily COVID death numbers are but a small fraction of the overall daily death numbers, but the way they are being reported makes it appear that COVID is the primary cause of death in Ohio when it clearly is not. While the reported COVID cases number is climbing, the number of daily COVID deaths has been significantly lower than in the spring, according to the Ohio Department of Health's own data.

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. A prominent hospital director in my county informed me 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, negative tests, and uncertain 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.

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

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

All of these reporting requirements shall apply when the Department of Health releases information related to cases of COVID-19. House Bill 624 seeks to stop the selective fearful public disclosure of information by ODH.

The following Ohio counties already report their COVID data at the ZIP code level:

Adams	Highland	Ross
Allen	Hocking	Sandusky
Ashland	Holmes	Scioto
Ashtabula	Huron	Seneca
Athens	Jackson	Shelby
Auglaize	Jefferson	Stark
Belmont	Knox	Summit
Brown	Lake	Trumbull
Butler	Lawrence	Tuscarawas
Carroll	Licking	Union
Champaign	Logan	Van Wert
Clark	Lorain	Vinton
Clermont	Lucas	Warren
Clinton	Madison	Washington
Columbiana	Mahoning	Wayne
Coshocton	Marion	Williams
Crawford	Medina	Wood
Cuyahoga	Meigs	Wyandot
Darke	Mercer	
Defiance	Miami	
Delaware	Monroe	
Erie	Montgomery	
Fairfield	Morgan	
Fayette	Morrow	
Franklin	Muskingum	
Fulton	Noble	
Gallia	Ottawa	
Geauga	Paulding	
Greene	Perry	
Guernsey	Pickaway	
Hamilton	Pike	
Hancock	Portage	
Hardin	Preble	
Harrison	Putnam	
Henry	Richland	

The following states report their COVID data by ZIP code:

Arizona	South Carolina
New Mexico	Florida
Oklahoma	Maryland
Illinois	New Jersey
Indiana	Delaware
Pennsylvania	Rhode Island
North Carolina	Maine

Many other states have joined this list in the months following this bill's introduction.

In fact, since this bill's inception, our own Ohio Department of Health has started to compile data relating to hospitalizations, congregate settings, test results, and daily statistics.

The issue is not that the information is unavailable to view, but rather, the manner in which it is presented. In fact, since this bill's inception, our own Ohio Department of Health has started to compile data relating to hospitalizations, congregate settings, test results, ZIP codes, and daily statistics.

True transparency is not dumping all COVID case data into an Excel spreadsheet for Ohioans to sort through. True transparency is not categorizing datasets relating to COVID mortalities, hospitalizations, and demographics in different systems, on different webpages, and asking Ohioans to search it on their own accord. True transparency is reporting the requested information in this bill to Ohioans when disseminating data to them. So many Ohioans are struggling to find work, pay their rent, and struggling with their mental health; how are they to find the time to conduct this research on their own?

An informed public is the essence of working democracy. This was the consensus reached by our own Supreme Court in 1975 on their ruling that courts recognize that the news media enable an informed public by gathering and reporting information about government operations. To adhere to this principle, it is imperative that the requested data be prominently reported to Ohioans as well.

Ohioans deserve to view the whole picture about this virus. 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.