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Committees:
Agriculture & Natural Resources, Vice Chair
General Government & Agency Review
Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs
Ways & Means

Special Appointments:
Coal Technical Advisory Committee
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Pickaway County Transportation Improvement District
Tax Expenditure Review Committee

Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee
Senate Bill 348—Sponsor Testimony
Tuesday, September 1, 2020

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 348.

Senate Bill 348 will modernize the membership of local boards of health and offer a much needed relief option for how local health districts address pandemics, epidemics, and other periods of emergency.

This bill originated from several problems from local health districts that have come up in my district over the past several months ranging from threatening notices to the public for no cause to three college students being threatened with 2nd degree misdemeanors and jail time just for playing golf!

With this bill, we plan to address those issues by retaining the requirement of at least one physician to serve on local boards, and we are adding at least one registered nurse, one licensed healthcare professional, and one business representative. These new requirements will make sure our boards of health are making sound local public health decisions with input on the economy.

We are incentivizing and rewarding licensed healthcare professionals to serve on local boards by allowing them to claim up to five credit hours annually to count toward their continuing education requirements for their professional licensure.

As a result of a threatening letter that panicked local business owners received in my district during the current pandemic--as if they weren't dealing with enough problems--we also specify that the words "will be" and "shall be" when referring to prosecution in general notifications to the public are prohibited during periods of emergency. Local boards can use the term "may be". This avoids any additional confusion and more accurately portrays the authority of local boards.

A major section of this bill will give local boards of health the ability to "reject" State Department of Health and State Director of Health Orders with at least a 2/3 supermajority vote of the board and only after a "collaborative consultation" with the Ohio Department of Health.

This will allow for local boards to make decisions that are best for their community and allows them to reject any health orders that are unreasonable. The 2/3 supermajority provision in the bill virtually guarantees at least one licensed healthcare professional concurs with the vote to depart from state policy.

Ultimately, the goal of this bill is to protect the health of the public while making sure our local economies are not punished. This bill simply taking the politics and politicians out of the decision making process.

Thank you once again, Chairman Burke and the members of the committee, for the opportunity to present this issue to you today.

Now I will turn the podium over to my colleague and joint sponsor on this bill, Senator Kristina Roegner.