



Interested Party Testimony
House Bill 621
December 17, 2020
Association of Ohio Health Commissioners

Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce & Workforce Committee, my name is Joe Mazzola and I currently serve as Health Commissioner, Franklin County Public Health and President of the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners (AOHC). The Association of Ohio Health Commissioners, on behalf of Ohio's 113 local health departments, would like to express its concern about House Bill 621 as it is currently being considered by your committee.

House Bill 621, in its current form, deals with the ability for businesses to remain open during a pandemic, epidemic or unusual prevalence of a dangerous communicable disease. Though perhaps well-intentioned, this proposal has far reaching implications for the future efforts of local health departments in Ohio to respond to communicable disease outbreaks. The bill limits our ability to take action consistent with internationally recognized best practices in public health to investigate and **limit the spread** of all types of communicable disease at any time, not just during a pandemic or epidemic. Such situations include foodborne outbreaks, tuberculosis, meningitis, and hepatitis which local health departments respond to daily.

We support amending the bill to focus on situations that occur only during a pandemic or epidemic declared by a public health emergency, and relate only to the communicable disease that is causing the epidemic or pandemic, NOT other communicable disease outbreaks that may occur during that time.

We believe amending the bill in this manner is consistent with the sponsors' intent to permit businesses to remain open if they are abiding by the requirements imposed by orders related to an epidemic or pandemic, but would maintain the importance of local board of health authority to act to address communicable disease outbreaks that are unrelated to the epidemic or pandemic. We therefore ask for your support for an amendment to HB 621. Thank you for your time and continued commitment to the health of all Ohioans.