



House Commerce & Labor Committee  
October 7, 2021  
Opponent Testimony – HB 435  
Ilene Shapiro, Summit County Executive

Chairman Stein, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and members of the House Commerce & Labor Committee I want to thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony in opposition to Am HB 435. Summit County is the home to more than 541,000 residents who continue to live with significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As County Executive, I lead one of only two counties in the state that has home-rule authority, a responsibility that I, and everyone with whom I serve, take seriously. HB 435 significantly undermines our ability to do our job.

While this pandemic has effected every one of us, there has been a disproportionate impact on certain communities across the state. Population density, types of jobs and economic opportunities and health of the population are all factors contributing to the conditions facing our residents. These are all factors that a local government is far better able to assess and address rather than the state imposing a one size fits all approach on all communities.

Home rule as outlined in the Ohio Constitution allows a local government to act in the best interest of their community. We are a large, diverse state. Local government officials are in the best position to determine the needs of their community. Just as many of you believe that mandates coming from Washington are inappropriate and over-reaching, the same mandates from the state to local governments make our job that much more difficult. As many of you argued that counties and local communities should have had the ability to re-open and be exempted from the State's shutdown last year, the same logic would support that local communities and businesses should have the ability to implement more stringent measures if necessary.

HB 435 ties our hands with regard to how we address the pandemic in our buildings and with our workforce. Local governments have an obligation to serve member of the public in a safe and healthy environment and it is those same local governments and leaders who stand in the best position to determine how that is accomplished. Local school districts and publicly owned or operated entities must have the ability to assess their unique circumstances and implement strategies to address those circumstances. The General Assembly once again imposing a one size fits all solution is shortsighted and dangerous to those on the front lines fighting this public health crisis.

The General Assembly is again seeking to diminish the provisions of home rule as established in the Ohio Constitution. I respectfully request that you not pass any legislation that dictates how we protect and move our community forward during this crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ilene Shapiro".

Ilene Shapiro, Executive  
County of Summit