

PROPONENT TESTIMONY OF:

Kathryn Poe

IN SUPPORT OF:

HB 55 Allow House committees/sessions be conducted virtually

House Government Oversight Committee Dear Members of the Committee, in 2018, I received a non-related donor bone marrow transplant for my rare genetic disease. This procedure removed my entire immune system, leaving me to rebuild it slowly over a number of years. Since then, I've become incredibly involved in the Ohio legislature, working on legislation surrounding rare disease, access to affordable insulin, and many other issues, but going to the state house to testify on these issues has always been incredibly dangerous for me, even before the pandemic began. For a year and half before the pandemic, I was required to wear a mask in public for my own health and was extremely weary of attending hearings in person for fear of close proximity to other people. Once the pandemic began, going to testify became completely impossible.

For people like me, access to the legislature has never been easy. One of the positives of the coronavirus has been opening up conversations about accessibility, and adding virtual testimony as an option would remove a significant barrier to entry for the general public. Although I recognize that this bill only opens virtual testimony in emergency situations, I hope that this will open up conversation about bringing virtual testimony to the statehouse permanently. Our democracy works best when everyone can be involved and have equitable access to lawmakers. Ohioans deserve to have access to the legislature from wherever they are, whoever they are.