

February 16, 2021

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairman John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Reform Committee:

I am testifying today in favor of HB 90 as an Ohio resident deeply concerned about the actions of Governor Mike DeWine, his emergency orders, and the dire effects all this has had on all of us. Following is my own personal account of how I and my family have been affected by Governor DeWine's emergency orders, which have caused me and my family harm, in particular his mask order.

I myself have been refused medical care due to the fact that I have a medical issue and cannot wear a mask. Wearing a mask causes me to be deprived of oxygen, as I am asthmatic and also have damaged lungs (from surviving A.R.D.S. in 2002). I get very short of breath and pass out; therefore, I do NOT wear a mask, period. I was scheduled for my annual eye examination in December, but my eye doctor will not allow anyone in the office who does not wear a mask (face shields are not acceptable, nor are medical exemptions). I really need to be seen every year. I have had 4 eye procedures since 2011, 2 surgeries for early cataracts, and 2 posterior capsulotomy laser procedures. I also have lattice degeneration of the retina in both eyes, as well as type II diabetes, and I need that annual exam with dilation of my eyes to allow my retinas to be examined for tearing. I was not able to have this done in December, and since there is no end date given for the mask order, I do not know when I will be able to have it done in the future. What if I develop a tear in my retina? Am I supposed to potentially lose my vision just because I cannot wear a mask? This is just plain wrong.

I am discriminated against when it comes to shopping, again because I cannot wear a mask, and many businesses will not admit anyone not wearing a mask, even if you have a medical exemption. This is because Governor DeWine again overstepped his authority, and sent his "Retail Compliance Unit" agents into stores, threatening to shut them down if they do allow unmasked shoppers, even those with medical exemptions. I do NOT have COVID. I cannot give another person a disease I do NOT have. I am sick and tired of being treated like a walking disease factory. This is discrimination, and it is illegal and morally wrong.

I was forced to miss several of my granddaughter's soccer games last year, again, because I cannot wear a mask. My son-in-law also missed some games, as my young grandson (3 years old) refuses to wear a mask, and therefore he had to stay home with him while my daughter attended. This was grossly unfair to the families of the players, to not allow them to attend and support their children/grandchildren, unless they were willing to put on a mask while OUTSIDE.

I see absolutely NO REASON for ANYONE to wear a mask outside, especially when people are socially distanced and not in close contact with others.

My young granddaughter (she is 11 years old) is forced daily to experience oxygen deprivation of her developing brain, by being forced into a mask simply to attend school. She has been diagnosed with asthma and should not even be wearing a mask at all, but Governor DeWine took away the alternative of our children being allowed to use clear face shields last August. Her school does not allow ANY mask breaks, not even when OUTSIDE, except when the children are eating lunch. They even expect the children to keep their masks on during GYM CLASS!! This is asking for a lawsuit when a child passes out. Even the so-called "experts" agree that people should NOT wear masks while exercising or playing sports. This is LEGALIZED CHILD ABUSE, and it will lead to a generation of brain-damaged children if it does not end very soon. Do we want an entire generation to be unable to perform normal tasks and become dependent on their elders? That's what forced masking of children may lead to, if this isn't stopped soon. When children's brains are deprived of enough oxygen, brain cells DIE. The damage cannot be reversed, either. There have been numerous doctors speak out against forced masking of children for this reason. Forced masking of our children, social distancing and restrictions on in-person school attendance has already led to an increased rate of depression and anxiety, and an increased suicide rate among our children. The damage to their mental health will take YEARS to overcome, and in some cases, will never be repaired. This MUST stop.

Also, just this morning, my granddaughter had an eye exam, and found out that not only she will need glasses; she has a vision problem that will require BIFOCALS to correct - at age 11!! She is going to have a very difficult time adjusting not only to wearing glasses, but doing so while being forced to wear a mask, and trying to see through the bifocal portion of the lenses with the mask obscuring her vision will be quite difficult. Almost everyone I know who wears glasses complains of fogging and problems seeing through the bottom portion of the lenses. NO ONE WITH GLASSES SHOULD EVER BE FORCED TO WEAR A MASK; CHILDREN in our schools who wear glasses should be allowed to use the face shields for however long these nonsense procedures continue.

Had Governor DeWine done the SENSIBLE thing and reminded us to practice good personal hygiene, not cough in the face of others, and stay home when you are ill, that would have been fine. It would have been fine if he had urged people to take precautions. That's not what he did. He overstepped his Constitutional authority and ORDERED us to do things we have never before done in this country during an epidemic of a contagious disease. He doesn't have that authority, and more to the point, he has no MORAL RIGHT to tell another person how to make decisions for his or her own health, or the health of family members. This virus has a recovery rate of over 99.8% - none of these emergency orders were necessary. Children don't spread

COVID, and only a very tiny minority of them even contract it, yet schools were closed last March, and many in some counties remain closed. Our elderly in nursing homes have been locked down since last year, not allowed to visit with families for many months. People have died ALONE in hospitals, without their loved ones allowed to say goodbye. Many people have been thrown out of work through no fault of their own when their employer's businesses were deemed "non-essential" and ordered closed. This has all happened due to fear and panic spread by the media, and aided by the Governor's actions.

None of Governor DeWine's emergency orders were voted on by our General Assembly. This amounts to a one-man RULE of our state, and that is NOT what our state Constitution spells out. Where does our Constitution give the governor the authority to close down a privately-owned business, if that business is legally operating and NOT breaking the law? What gives the governor the authority to decide which businesses are "essential" and which are not? They are ALL ESSENTIAL to those who own them, or work for them. Where in our Constitution does it give our governor the power to tell people that they CANNOT work to provide a living for themselves and their families? Or to force us to wear something under the guise of a "health order" (that is NOT a LAW)? And WHY is he using OUR TAX DOLLARS to pay for what amounts to "snitches" in our places of business that are open, looking for anyone who is NOT wearing a mask? How is THAT CONSTITUTIONAL? For that matter, how is it CONSTITUTIONAL to force businesses to enforce his orders that are NOT LAWS, under threats of monetary fines and possible closings? The police in many jurisdictions will not enforce his mask order for that specific reason, because it is NOT a LAW. A deputy sheriff in my county specifically told me that "we enforce the LAW, not mandates".

Our governor does not have the Constitutional authority to ignore the General Assembly. It is the job of the General Assembly to make laws in Ohio. It's the job of the governor to see that the laws are enforced fairly. The governor doesn't have the Constitutional authority to issue a "mandate" and have it enforced as if it was a properly-enacted law. If he wants something to become LAW, he needs to propose that to the General Assembly and allow the Constitutional process to work. He just can't create a LAW with a stroke of his pen. That's not how our system of government works.

HB 90 restores the balance of power to where it should be, between the three, COEQUAL branches of government, and finally gives a VOICE to the PEOPLE of Ohio via their legislators during a declared emergency. The General Assembly should NEVER have been bypassed during this time. Our businesses, our economy, our social and emotional well-being and mental health, and the future of our children is on the line. Our state is dying. It's time for this to stop.

Please stand up and protect our God-given rights, personal liberties, and the future of our state by voting YES on HB 90!

Thank you,

Lynn Withrow
Belpre, Ohio