

Doug Golden
Small Business Owner
State and Local Government Committee
Support - HB 90

Good Day Chairperson Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly and honorable committee members.

My name is Doug Golden; I am a Husband, Father of 2 amazing young women and a small business owner of 27 years. Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today.

It is hard to believe that March 9, 2020 is the year anniversary when Governor DeWine declared a state of emergency. Within a few short weeks the Ohio Department of Health issued a stay at home order, under the direction of the Governor, and made a determination of what an essential business is. All business is essential when it comes to providing for family. If your job puts food on the table, provides a roof over your head, and pays the bills then the job is essential. No one should be allowed, to tell anyone they are not essential. To illustrate my point, lets use a Jewelry storeowner, which is a family business for many generations. The store's success has provided everything necessary for this family for generations and then one day with the stroke of a pen is deemed non-essential and required to close for an unspecified period of time. On the other hand, Walmart is deemed essential, is allowed to operate, and by coincidence they sell jewelry. Therefore, a person enters Walmart for food, and because they are in the essential business's store, stops buy the jewelry counter and purchases a new ring. How is that scenario fair to the Jewelry storeowner who was forced to close due to a signed order and is now unable to provide for the family? This is a simple example of what I have witnessed and experienced, as our three-branch system of government became one of dictatorship fueled by fear-mongering and false information. The unilateral decision of continuing to keep Ohio closed and implementing mandates has affected my family in ways that I thought were never possible. As a believer and advocate for medical freedom,

the simple task of shopping for food and necessities has become tedious and exhausting. I am no longer able to just pop in and out of a store for an item or two. Instead, I need to prepare mentally and physically to defend my freedom of choice as to why I choose not to wear a mask. It has become commonplace to have a person yell and berate me for not wearing a mask, and on some occasions being forced out of a store. There have been a few times when I have been approached by a police officer and asked to leave just because I am not wearing a mask. In addition, I have witnessed members of this legislative body call out citizens who were not wearing masks, because they were uncomfortable, yet sat in the same room and engaged in conversation for almost an hour before doing so, and then excused themselves. To me this action was more of political show than anything else. Let me be clear, I respect your right to wear a mask or not, just like I respect your right to smoke or not. Never in a million years, in this United States, would I ever think a sewn piece of material could bring out the worst in people. But, I always have to remember as Governor DeWine says, "We are in this together". My truth is, no, we are not! If the Governor truly believes we are in this together, then he would be open to a town hall meeting and listening to public opinion and then develop a plan of action that includes the concerns of all Ohioans. His "experts" for this plan would be from all walks of life, not a select few who have biased opinions.

Small Business is one of the hardest-hit communities by the continued mandates. With many small businesses out of business, my small business of 27 years is also in trouble. My wife and I have put our hearts and souls into our business. There have been many sacrifices over the years. We never imagined; one day we would be on the verge of closing, due to a shutdown mandate. Our business relies on events, corporate meetings, camps, social gatherings, and school athletics, to name a few. In 2020 our business revenue was down over 55%, and we anticipate another decrease in sales for 2021, provided we stay in business. I am afraid; we too may be another statistic of Covid, another business, closed due to no business. So, where do I go from here? At this point in my life, I never expected to have to start over and be at risk of losing everything, including my home. I never expected to have lost my 20-year-old daughter to a vaccine injury and my surviving daughter being isolated every day. She chooses not shop or go out socially because she does

not want to face the challenges and meanness of people for not wearing a mask. The current system is broken, and this bill is a step in the right direction. This bill will, protect the citizens of Ohio from further tyrannical decisions; it brings back the checks and balances necessary in our three-branch system of government. I am a supporter of this bill; I encourage each of you to speak with your colleagues in caucus and publicly support HB 90. Should the Governor veto this bill, please continue your support for a veto override vote. Maybe, if this bill becomes law quickly, my business will not become another Covid statistic. It is time to re-open Ohio. Thank you for your time, and I am willing to answer any questions.

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