

Proponent Testimony for HB 90
from Tamara Domka OTR/L and OAMF member
Scheduled for 2/17/21 in Hearing Room 121

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

I am testifying today in support of HB 90 as an Occupational Therapist and Ohio resident who is deeply concerned about the courses of action being taken under the current emergency powers and the concerning, neglectful, and frightening effects it is having on all of us.

I have worked in a nursing home for several years. Those working in the facility that I am familiar with are forced to receive a nasal swab test, which is usually made in China, on the designated test day or be banned from work. This has been ongoing. If it is your day off, you drive in no matter how far you have to drive to work. If you need to find a sitter to watch your children, you do that also just to be tested. Mileage and time to be tested on your day off are not reimbursed at least not for those who work in the rehab department. With various information coming out about the tests, the continual forced testing concerns me. Furthermore, I witnessed healthy, symptom-free workers forced to stay home. One and perhaps more have had to use vacation time for pay or receive no pay. Then the health department made her children and children's babysitter quarantine. The babysitter, who had another part time job, had to call off work from that job and lose income. It is a vicious cycle. At times the two assistants I worked with could not even obtain twenty hours of work a week when they normally had full time hours. Eventually one assistant was laid off. Testing in the nursing home began mid July (despite the number of cases being low in July) every other week, then increased to once a week and then to twice a week. The number of positive cases reported increased as the amount of testing increased. Some residents left against medical advice due to social isolation from the no visitor policy. At the beginning of the pandemic, residents had their nebulizers taken away due to fear that it may spread the virus, even if the resident had no signs or symptoms of the virus or a positive test result. Nebulizers help people with severe breathing problems. Without the nebulizer they feel like they are suffocating and naturally become very anxious. One resident who had his nebulizer taken away became very short of breath and anxious. He was given an anti-anxiety medication, but not his nebulizer. Within two weeks he declined from being able to walk with a walker, dress and feed himself with occasional supervision to not being able to complete any of those tasks without 75 to 100% assistance! Residents are not only isolated from family members, but also from each other. New residents are quarantined to their room for fourteen days, and if given a new roommate within those fourteen days, the quarantine starts over, thus making some residents quarantine in their room for up to four weeks. Long term residents are often confined to their hallway. Group activities, which previously cheered residents and boosted morale, became non-existent in fear of spreading the virus. Many residents declined due to depression, isolation and limited reasons to move. They have not eaten in the dining room for nearly a year. They eat every meal alone in their room day after day after day. One nurse laments being so careful in keeping herself and her family isolated from her husband because of his chronic illness. He passed away in 2020, but not due to

COVID. He missed his family's comfort, and now the family is having an extra difficult time grieving since they were not near him to say their final goodbyes. I have also noticed a decline in care not just due to staff needing to follow multiple procedures, which takes much extra time and slows their ability to respond in a timely manner, but also due to a lack of accountability to family members who previously stopped to check on a loved one. What these residents have endured and are enduring is tragic and needs to stop. The daily torture from the emergency orders is worse than death itself for many of the residents.

HB 90 would help restore the balance of power. It would begin to give voice to the people of Ohio via their legislators during a declared emergency. It would also allow input from various professionals in the scientific community, not just those who are hand picked by the executive branch and state health department.

Ohio businesses, our economy, our social and emotional well-being, our children, and our dear elderly are all suffering. We are not thriving under the oppressive orders of an overreaching governor.

I am asking you to protect the people of Ohio. I am asking you to be bold and courageous. I am asking you to stand up and be heroes for the people of Ohio by voting YES on HB 90.

Thank you,

Tamara Domka, OTR/L
OAMF Member