

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

My name is Abbey Shearer and I am a resident of West Chester, Ohio. I am submitting this testimony today to express my strong opposition to HB 90 which would allow the legislature to rescind or limit health orders and directives.

It is common sense that health related orders should be based upon science and data. During health emergencies, such as a pandemic, I want the health protocols protecting my family to be rooted in fact. Health departments have the expertise needed to determine the best course of action - an expertise that most members of the legislature do not possess. Shifting decision-making power to the legislature in this instance makes no sense and does not make my family or friends safer. My mother was a nurse for 35 years and worked for the health department. My sister is a mental health counselor for underprivileged, addicts, and other at risk populations, and my other sister is a teacher. I taught college English courses and worked for Upward Bound, a program for at risk youth. When I speak of keeping my family and friends safe, I speak of our entire community, not just the privileged, who are able to take steps to keep themselves safe when public health policy is NOT based on science.

I also fail to see how placing 30 day limitations upon orders is consistent with protecting the health of the citizens of Ohio. Random time frames that disrupt the needed protections only endanger us. It makes zero sense to implement health orders to protect the public - only to halt those orders randomly because of an arbitrary time frame in legislation. The current pandemic has made this infinitely clear to all of us.

To be frank, I have also witnessed many Representatives demonstrating a shocking lack of knowledge in interviews, hearings and on social media regarding health orders. It is hard to have confidence that you will make informed decisions about our health when there is blatant disregard for the science behind the current orders. For example, refusing to implement a mask requirement at the Statehouse endangers staff and citizens. I have also seen legislation based on completely invalid medical theories introduced at the Ohio Statehouse.

The health of Ohio citizens should rest upon science and fact -- and not upon political ideology of elected officials or the undue influence of donors. For these reasons, I urge you to vote no on HB 90. Please, for our children, for our future, for equity -- VOTE NO!

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