

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

My name is Anita Somani M.D., and I am a resident of Columbus, 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. As a physician who practices in Central Ohio, I saw the benefits of the directives that Governor DeWine and Dr. Acton instituted last year. In health care we have made masks mandatory to protect ourselves and our patients which was a result of the science supporting it. Once the pandemic became politicized, Dr. Acton was personally attacked for doing the right thing and resigned. We now have a Health Department that is not led by a physician and a Statehouse that is politicizing a public health crisis even more.

It is common sense that health related orders should be based upon science and data. During health emergencies, such as a pandemic, my patients and I want health protocols that are designed by experts. 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 protect Ohioans from a virus that has killed close to a half million Americans.

Placing 30 day limitations upon orders only disrupt needed protections and In the specific case of the Covid pandemic we have no way of knowing how long it will take to get to herd immunity or to protect patients from the variants that are now being identified.

When the testimony in front of the House (<https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2021/02/19/youtube-censors-ohio-house-hearing-video-for-covid-19-misinformation/>) is taken off YouTube for misinformation It is hard to have confidence that you will make informed decisions about public health. For example, refusing to implement a mask requirement at the Statehouse endangers staff and citizens and not allowing virtual testimony limits the ability to hear all sides of an issue.

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, as a physician in Ohio I urge you to vote no on HB 90.

