

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

My name is Jessica Quade, and I am a primary care physician in Columbus. My office is located in an area of Columbus that primarily serves Black and immigrant populations. I have seen the way that COVID has ravaged this area with most of my patients being significantly affected in one way or another from COVID. As a health professional, I believe it is best for me to do what I know which is to care for my patients and support them during these difficult times. It becomes difficult to do my job effectively when I have to continually defend public and national health guidelines because somehow, this pandemic has been politicized. Politicians want to be able to overturn public health orders and repeal mask mandates which have been proven time and time again to significantly decrease the spread of COVID and save lives. Instead of taking time to discuss my patients' health disparities, medications, and dietary changes to help with their chronic disease management, I have to defend science and discuss why many politicians in our area are not in agreement with health officials. I already work with a community that, rightfully so, has mistrust of the medical system, but I am having to continually work even harder in the middle of a pandemic to overcome misinformation spread by elected officials in order to ensure my patients and your constituents stay safe and receive correct information. When it came to physicians wanting to discuss gun control, we were told to stay in our lane. Well now, I would like the politicians to stay in their lane and leave the science and medicine up to those of us who actually do this for a living.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Quade, MD