



Rep. Scott Wiggam
77th Ohio House District

Chairman Mathews, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Public Health Policy Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 617.

As a legislative body, it is vital that we protect the liberties of our citizens and allow them to have a voice in the laws and societal norms that govern them on a day to day basis. Many Representatives have heard from Ohioans across the state asking for the freedom to choose whether or not they wear facial coverings in public places. During the last crisis, many witnessed the unsanitary handling and disposal of these devices that directly affected your respiratory system – whether stuffed in bags for multiple uses or being handed to clients by untrained employees to the casual reach in the communal mask bag and grab one for yourself in order to access a public location. Many of us witnessed the discrimination against individuals that had health conditions preventing them from wearing masks in public locations segregating them from society.

A great number of our constituents wanted their children to be able to attend school, without having their face covered, and their ability to learn stunted. Their calls to us for choice on the issue of masking were not acted upon. This legislation will finally give citizens of our state a voice on the issue of mandatory face coverings in places of public accommodation, where public services are rendered, including our public and private schools. HB617 will give Ohioans the right to determine for themselves and their children if they would like to breathe freely while participating in activities like school, shopping and interaction with government services.

Our legislative body was unable to provide for protections for Ohioans who wanted to participate freely in commerce and education activities without being forced into a facial covering. We now have an opportunity to right that wrong, by moving forward this legislation allowing citizens to be unmasked during any future crisis.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I ask that you join me in the support of HB617 and I will attempt to answer any questions that you may have about this resolution.