



Opponent Testimony
Senate Bill 311
November 18, 2020
Association of Ohio Health Commissioners

Chairman Wiggam, ranking member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee:

The Association of Ohio Health Commissioners (AOHC), on behalf of Ohio's 113 local health departments, wishes to express its opposition to amended substitute Senate Bill 311.

Senate Bill 311, in its current form, is completely different than the introduced version, proposing a dramatic change in public health authority in the state of Ohio. This proposal has far reaching implications for the future efforts of local health departments in Ohio to take action, consistent with internationally recognized best practices in public health, to investigate and **limit the spread** of all types of communicable disease. In addition to respiratory disease such as COVID-19, just a few examples of more common reasons for contact tracing include foodborne outbreaks, tuberculosis, meningitis, and hepatitis. The notion that action cannot be taken to prevent the spread of any of these serious illnesses to those who have not been **directly** exposed is contradictory to public health best practices that have been scientifically tested and verified over the past 100 years.

Just imagine if a foodborne outbreak was traced back to a particular restaurant, but the local health department was not able to order the closure of that restaurant while looking for the food source of the outbreak. That would result in many more individuals, who had not yet visited the restaurant, to be exposed to the contaminated food item and becoming ill.

It would be extremely unfortunate for something of this magnitude and far-reaching consequence to be done during this pandemic that would have a lasting impact on our ability to control communicable disease outbreaks in the future.

We believe that the time will come for careful consideration of different ways to equip our state to respond in the future, including legislative changes that will strengthen our ability to respond in future public health crises. However, now is not that time, so we respectfully request that you oppose SB 311, in its current form. Thank you for your time!