



PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

**Opponent Testimony  
Senate Bill 311  
November 18, 2020  
Hamilton County Public Health**

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

Please find this note in opposition to the amendments to amended substitute Senate Bill 311.

As a county health commissioner faced with a novel pandemic, the ability to act quickly and decisively to protect public health is of paramount importance. In early 2020, as the details of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (the virus that causes COVID-19) were unfolding, the lack of information and data about the virus' behavior and activity hand-cuffed healthcare professionals.

In such cases, medical science knows that viruses spread from person-to-person through a variety of paths, whether physical, respiratory or combinations thereof. Regardless, as the novel virus took hold in the U.S., science had only limited tools prevent the spread – physical distancing and hand hygiene. We know empirically that keeping people apart limits the spread of most disease, particularly viral disease.

Ohio acted quickly and decisively to limit the spread of COVID-19 during the crucial period when the country was just learning about the virus, its control and treatment. Using the tools available – physical separation and hand hygiene – Ohio was able to limit the number of new cases and not overwhelm the State's healthcare infrastructure while we developed knowledge of the novel virus.

Contrast this to present times. We now have a greater understanding of the virus, its spread, preventive and treatment modalities. It is frightening to imagine what may have transpired during the early phases of COVID-19 had we not acted to slow the spread of the virus. Hospitalizations and ultimately deaths would have spiraled out of control early in the pandemic, as so little was known about treatment.

Public health must maintain the ability to act quickly and decisively in order to protect vulnerable populations. We are able to close food service facilities demonstrating health-threatening practices. We can limit carriers of tuberculosis and other diseases to protect public health. Scientific best practices have taught us that we can protect those either directly or indirectly exposed through testing, quarantine and isolation. These practices, as documented for decades by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, serve as the foundation for protecting public health.

We respectfully urge you to consider the health and safety of Ohio citizens by allowing public health to continue to implement the best practices as identified and proven scientifically. Thank you for the opportunity to add our comments to this critical legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Kesterman", is written over a faint circular stamp.

Greg Kesterman  
Health Commissioner  
Hamilton County Public Health