



MOUNT CARMEL
Opponent Testimony
Senate Bill 311
House State & Local Government Committee
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Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the House State & Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 311.

I am the chief nursing officer for Mount Carmel Health System. As one of the largest integrated health systems in the community, Mount Carmel serves more than a million patients in Central Ohio each year. Our health system provides people-centered care at four hospitals – Mount Carmel East, Mount Carmel Grove City, Mount Carmel St. Ann's and Mount Carmel New Albany – an inpatient rehabilitation hospital, free-standing emergency centers, outpatient facilities, surgery centers, urgent care centers, primary care and specialty care physician offices, community outreach sites and homes across the region.

I want to thank the members of this committee and your colleagues in the state legislature for your public service here in the Ohio General Assembly during this challenging time. It is within context of the times we find ourselves in, a current surge of COVID-19 and a resulting increased strain on our hospitals, where I would like to focus my comments. As noted, I appreciate your efforts at the Statehouse on behalf of all Ohioans. However, as it pertains to Senate Bill 311, I do not believe now is the time to have the conversation about the substance or content of this legislation.

As cases have risen dramatically across the entire state, including here in central Ohio, hospitalizations have increased significantly. Across all central Ohio hospitals, we have seen a 226% increase in hospitalizations since Oct. 17. To put that another way, our hospitals have 2.5 times the number of COVID-19 patients that we had a month ago. It's possible that our number of COVID-19 patients could eventually exceed our hospital's current capacity and I have been working with our team to refine our surge plan to meet that need.

Our staffing levels are stretched thin and our team of physicians, nurses and other staff are exhausted. At the same time, they show up every day committed to providing safe, high-quality care when our community needs it most. The dedication of these colleagues has been extraordinary, and I am honored to work alongside them.

I know that hospitals across our state are seeing similar increases as this fall surge is in every part of Ohio. And while I appreciate the service of this committee and the members of the Ohio legislature, now is not the time to discuss the contents or substance of Senate Bill 311. Our focus needs to be doing everything we can to support our hospitals and staff and our patients, ensuring they are our number one priority. We have all demonstrated that we can do remarkable things in these remarkable times. We just need your continuing support where it is most important.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Please reach out to me or to Jason Koma, Regional Director of Gov. Affairs at 614-546-3410 or jkoma@mchs.com if you have any questions.

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