



TO: Members of the House State and Local Government Committee

DATE: November 19, 2020

RE: Concerns with Senate Bill 311

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On behalf of the Ohio State Medical Association, the Ohio Hospital Association, the Ohio Children's Hospital Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics—Ohio Chapter, and the Ohio Business Roundtable, we are writing today to express our concerns regarding Senate Bill 311. Our organizations represent physicians, hospitals and health systems, and a cross section of businesses, large and small all over the state. All of our members have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic that has now spread through every sector of our state.

SB 311 seeks to prohibit the authority of the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) to issue mandatory statewide or regional quarantine or isolation orders that apply to individuals who have not been either directly exposed to or medically diagnosed with the disease that is the subject of the order. It also allows the General Assembly to adopt a concurrent resolution to rescind certain ODH orders or rules for preventing the spread of contagious or infectious disease.

While we are currently experiencing unprecedented increases in COVID-19 cases and new daily records of hospitalizations and ICU stays, we would urge that the Ohio Legislature rethink passing this legislation at this time. As many know, one of the most concerning aspects of the COVID-19 disease is the ability for transmission to occur between parties unknowingly, and how individuals who are actually positive for COVID-19 can unintentionally spread the disease to others because they may not experience any symptoms. Community spread has been and continues to be one of the primary ways the disease is passed to our loved ones and fellow Ohioans. If the authority of ODH is limited to only issuing executive orders to protect those who have been knowingly directly exposed or who have been medically diagnosed, our organizations fear there are millions of Ohioans who will be put at risk and whose safety will be compromised. A proposal like SB 311 will not help Ohio stem the rising COVID-19 case numbers, hospitalizations, ICU admissions, and deaths occurring as a result of the pandemic.

Tragically, over 5,700 Ohioans have lost their lives now due to COVID-19, and their loved ones face immeasurable loss. Now is not the time to let up. The public health crisis is not over, and making changes to the manner in which the state department of health issues orders to protect the health and well-being of Ohioans is not the right direction to go at this time, especially as spread of COVID-19 continues to accelerate. We need to stay the course, keep fighting, and make sure we continue to wear masks and practice social distancing.

A pandemic like this has not been seen in our lifetimes. That is why, to protect ourselves and each other, we need to do things that are unfamiliar and perhaps even uncomfortable to us. We must make sacrifices and find innovative, safe ways to stay connected and support each other until this storm passes. We must do this together.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a meaningful contributor to the legislative process, and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.