

**Testimony of Donna Jo Kazee**  
**Proponent, Senate Bill 22**  
**House State and Local Government Committee**  
***March 8, 2021***

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and honorable members of the State and Local Government Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 22 (SB 22). My name is Donna Jo Kazee, and I am a former biomedical engineer, mother of two, and advocate for health freedom, consumer rights, and informed consent. As well as having a congenital significant neuromuscular disorder, I have two children with medical conditions, some of which are associated with vaccine injury.

Like most people with strong science backgrounds, I thought I knew and trusted the science presented various experts, including mine and my children's doctors. Through a series of mishaps and reactions, I (like many other parents) learned the hard way that experts are here to help us understand our circumstances and options but cannot be completely trusted to know everything about our bodies or what the research actually says. I have experienced the apex of medicine, where multidisciplinary teams and brilliant minds come together to solve real-time medical issues with the latest research and ideas. I have also experienced medical errors from inexperience, incompetence, and arrogance; gaslighting, denial, and rejection.

In the words of esteemed British epidemiologist Tom Jefferson (speaking to our current pandemic): "Evidence-based medicine was meant to inform a decision; it was not meant to BE the decision." Very early in this pandemic, I asked a state legislator how other issues related to the measures were being tracked. Who was tracking suicides, homicides, injuries, hospitalizations, family dissolutions, drug abuse, untreated medical issues, deaths from isolation, and other issues related to despair? His answer was: Nobody. Until we were past the state of emergency, nothing mattered but slowing the virus.

The public was encouraged to trust the experts and the scientific consensus. I will remind you that the scientific consensus has been devastatingly wrong and corrupt at many points in history. From the medical establishment who drove out Dr. Semmelweiss for suggesting that washing hands between surgeries might spare women from dying of puerperal fever in childbirth to the irresponsible prescription of thalidomide and twilight births for pregnant women in the 1960s. The consensus was VIOXX was safe -- until too many heart attacks showed otherwise. By the way, VIOXX was being repurposed as an orphan drug as recently as 2018 to help with rare conditions. Even more recently, consensus about the safety and use of antibiotics led to the age of resistance and super-bugs. And Ohio was one of many states hard-hit by the opioid crisis, which was also due to the consensus science that opioids were safer and less addictive than they actually were.

Officials, media, businesses, and much of the general public adopted a “sick until proven healthy” criteria that applied to every facet of existence. Most of us agree that if you are sick, you should stay home. That message changed radically, with no regard to the effects it would have on people or the economy. You had to wear a mask because you COULD be sick and not know it. You had to keep your distance. You had to stay home except when absolutely necessary. People with disabilities have long fought the stigma of contagion. Our leaders and experts brought it all back with one fell swoop. It became mainstream to rail against and ostracize those “unworthy” of being in public. People with no symptoms of illness.

Can't wear a mask or will not because you find it offensive? Stay home. You are unworthy to participate. No concern was given for people with hearing impairments who need to see the whole face to communicate. People with autism who avoid eye contact because it can be painful (such as my son) whose public outings now involve a sea of eyes and no reassuring smiles. People with violent assault histories for whom each of you who are masked can be a reminder of their trauma. I had never believed I would be denied access to a community building again -- until I had to try to navigate which businesses would allow someone in without a mask. Amazingly, at the same time, we were hearing so much about privilege, we were actually endangering those with the least privilege -- isolating them at home with inadequate resources, no social opportunities, abusive family, and no end in sight.

We started with two weeks to flatten the curve. To protect our most vulnerable. To keep from straining health resources. Did we accomplish any of that? I would say not. I have watched as families around us were ruined. Businesses went completely under. Children of friends took their own lives. Lesser privileged and disabled children did not receive the services they needed and fell behind -- possibly too far to catch up. All of our children were isolated and told that they are responsible for keeping grandparents safe. And those same grandparents and great-grandparents are isolated in nursing homes, allowed only short visits with family through windows and on devices and only getting to be with family in their dying hours.

Ohio needs legislation like SB 22 to protect against all the things that went wrong with Ohio's pandemic response, to honor the minority rights when action must be taken for the majority, to consider the whole picture and the consequences of every action. I know from experience that the best way to protect the vulnerable is to have a robust and productive society around them that feels confident in their own wellbeing and future. These changes should include all relevant sections of ORC and have reasonable time limits, so that individuals and businesses are not harmed irreparably before action is taken. I urge each of you to vote YES for SB 22 so that there are some checks and balances on what can be done to us in a pandemic. Thank you for your consideration.