



Testimony on SB 22
Erich Bittner, Director of Government Relations
Ohio Association of County Boards of DD
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Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee;

On behalf of the Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, I thank you for this opportunity to share our concerns with Senate Bill 22. OACB supports the current public health orders as the most effective means of protecting the vulnerable population we serve, and we urge extreme caution in installing any mechanisms that would impair the administration's ability to respond to the ongoing health crisis in a prompt and comprehensive manner.

Ohioans with developmental disabilities are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Many people served by county boards of DD have co-occurring, long-term health issues such as immunologic, heart, and lung conditions that affect how well their bodies can fight the virus, and people with those conditions are more likely to experience severe or deadly cases of COVID-19. Many people with developmental disabilities also face a higher risk of exposure to the virus given where and how they must live to receive supports. The virus can spread quickly in congregate settings, and even those who live in the community or with family may still have increased risk of exposure through necessary contact with home- and community-based service providers.

Because of these vulnerabilities, the administration has recognized the need for additional safeguards for this population. OACB applauds Governor DeWine for his leadership in crafting a pandemic response that has prioritized the safety of Ohioans with developmental disabilities and other vulnerable populations. Over the course of the past year since the virus first reached Ohio, Governor DeWine's administration has worked openly and collaboratively with stakeholders in the DD field to ensure the safety of the people we serve while still facilitating access to vital services and resources in the community. This collaboration has resulted in better health outcomes for Ohioans with DD who have contracted COVID compared to those with DD in other states.¹

The current system has worked well to mitigate the impact of the epidemic and preserve the lives of medically vulnerable Ohioans with developmental disabilities. With concern for this population in mind, we ask that SB 22 be rejected.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. I will be happy to talk about the issue in additional detail at your convenience.

¹ Dharampuriya P, Jo C, Bommireddipalli A, Abend S. COVID-19 Related Experiences and Outcomes in People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Presented at AMA Research Symposium, Dec 3, 2020