



**FROM THE DESK OF
COUNCILWOMAN LISA KELLER
March 9, 2021**

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairman John, Ranking Member Kelly and Members of the State and Local Government Committee:

I am Lisa Keller, a member of Delaware City Council for the past 12 years. I thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Senate Bill 22.

As a local elected official, I listened with great interest when Governor DeWine announced last week a metric to end mandatory health orders in Ohio, orders that have a great impact on the community that I serve. I wondered if this metric might lead you to believe your work on this bill might no longer be necessary. Not only does this bill continue to be essential but it may well be our only path to getting back to the Ohio we all remember.

I fully expected Governor DeWine's new metric would be related to Ohio's hospitalization numbers. Why wouldn't it be? A year ago when we began the social contract of "flattening the curve" and we shuttered our businesses and brought our children home from school, we did this to prevent our healthcare system from being overwhelmed. No one can dispute the wisdom of working to ensure everyone who needs care is able to get it. Weeks ago, Governor DeWine tied the lifting of Ohio's curfew to hospitalization numbers. But he didn't link opening Ohio and releasing health mandates to hospitalizations because if he had, we likely would already be open like the other states we see releasing mandates. Since the beginning of this month, according to the hospitalization metrics published on the state's dashboard, Covid-19 patients have made up less than 4% of our total hospitalizations and less than 5% of our ICU capacity statewide. What is the justification for these continued health measures? How much flatter can this curve get and how much more do Ohioans need to sacrifice to preserve hospital capacity that is nowhere close to being threatened?

I then assumed we might be using the Ohio Public Health Advisory System as our metric for opening Ohio. I'm actually glad he didn't because we all know what a disaster that has been, tying the colors of counties to CASE counts keeping counties stuck at red for months despite improving metrics. Today, not a single one of our 88 Ohio counties is currently flagging the hospitalization indicator. Governor DeWine essentially abandoned this system, yet he kept its biggest weakness- case counts.

Not only did he tie his new metric to case counts, he established a brand new one that is not just mathematically improbable, it is actually absurd given our current level of testing. This metric is 50 cases per 100k in population or to put a simpler way- 417 cases per day.

Ohio's population is 11,689,100. 50 cases per 100k over two weeks equals 5844 new cases over 14 days or 417 new cases a day.

$(11689100 \times .005 = 5844.55 / 14 \text{ days} = 417.43)$

Dr. Vanderhoff stated to reporters he was unable to predict when Ohio might meet this metric. In my community- we're depending on this to plan our future so "I don't know" isn't an acceptable answer. I'm no Dr. Vanderhoff but I took a shot at the prediction myself.

I'm also going to explain to you how this metric is NOT the answer for Ohio and why we still desperately need YOU to restore our balance of power with Senate Bill 22.

First, we could reach this metric (the one that took 12 full months to develop) by stopping all testing immediately in Ohio. That would be insane, right? Bear with me. You can't deny it would put us under 417 daily cases but we know that wouldn't reflect true level of risk in Ohio. So if this metric can so easily be achieved without even measuring risk, why are we using it?

If we can all agree we're not going to stop testing in Ohio, I can pull out my calculator to start working some numbers to see WHEN we might hit this metric. Remember, it is 417 cases per day that is the magic number and it is statewide, so if the area you represent is doing incredibly well but one area of the state isn't- sorry, we're all in this together.

Ohio's current positivity rate is 3% according to the state's dashboard. That means out of every 100 tests we give, only 3 are positive. That's pretty amazing actually and according to the World Health Organization in May, societies can consider reopening when they are below 5% but Governor DeWine isn't using that metric- because again, we would already be there.

So if 3% of our tests are positive and we're averaging 45,000 tests a day, that leaves us with 1350 cases- more than triple where we need to be to fully open Ohio. According to Governor DeWine, things need to get much better before that can happen.

So how do we get "better?" We need to lower that positivity rate. So let's manipulate some numbers. Instead of every 3 people out of 100 we test being positive, let's make it 1. Drastic, I realize. 1 out of every 100 people test positive. I don't want to ruin the suspense but it still wouldn't be enough to hit the metric.

With a 1% positivity rate and the same number of tests being given in Ohio (45,000), we still end up at 450 cases a day. Can you believe it is STILL over the limit to open Ohio? By the way, this

example is preposterous because we could pretty much have NO COVID at all and still possibly end up with a 1% positivity rate because of false positive on the tests alone. That's just statistics.

So if we can't achieve this metric even with a preposterous positivity rate, we'll have to lower the number of tests. Lowering the number of tests doesn't change our disease rate but it is our only viable option.

If we cut the number of tests we're doing in half with our current positivity rate, will that do it? No, we're still over the metric at 675.

I'll skip to the punchline. The magic number of tests is actually 13,900. That's exactly how many people a day we need to test to reach the governor's metric in two weeks. Nothing about how much disease in our population would change (3% positivity rate), we're just changing the number of tests.

Again, if this metric is so easily altered by the amount of testing we are doing, why are we using it? And furthermore, why does anyone believe this is a legitimate path to re-opening Ohio?

Ohio will be opened when Governor DeWine decides it is time and not a second sooner- no matter what other states are doing, no matter what the legislature thinks should happen, UNLESS you act decisively to end this one person rule we've all been living voicelessly under for a year.

On behalf of the community I represent, and as a councilwoman that knows how to do fifth grade math, I plead with you to provide the oversight we are in desperate need of in Ohio. End the political theatre, end the ridiculous metrics. Reassert yourselves as the leaders we've elected you to be. Please act quickly and decisively to pass Senate Bill 22.

Thank you. I'm happy to take your questions.