

Proponent Testimony for SB22

Jennifer Burr 2/3/2021

Chairman Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Government Oversight & Reform Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity today to testify in support of SB22. My name is Jennifer Burr, from Mason, Ohio. I am a mom of three and a former educator. Since April, I have also been a board member of Ohio Parents for Traditional Education, a group of over 10,000 Ohioans who have been tirelessly fighting to get our kids back in school, back to normalcy. And I have to tell you, we're exhausted.

I am here today to advocate for the group most affected by Governor DeWine's never-ending restrictions and mandates, and that same group is also the least likely to be affected by or even to transmit the virus. Our children are silently suffering.

My kids are in the minority. According to the Governor's own numbers, only 29% of Ohio students were attending in-person school at the beginning of this year. Even though my kids are, I feel compelled to speak for those who aren't as fortunate. It's been nearly a year, A YEAR, of our kids' lives that has been stolen. Study after study has proven that our youth aren't vectors for this virus, yet we continue to punish them the most. Their daily routines, their sense of normalcy have been destroyed.

I watched the depression settle in with my 7th grader when remote learning started last March. He missed his friends, his classmates, his teachers. He sat in front of a screen for 5-7 hours a day. Despite my best efforts, my then-Kindergartener lost his emerging reading progress during that time and is now behind as a 1st grader. I can't even begin to imagine the learning loss for kids in Ohio who have yet to see the inside of a classroom this year.

Now, even though they're blessed to be back in school, it is FAR from normal: My boys are forced to wear masks all day, even during physical education, they're sitting all day at the same desk – no changing classes. They're separated from friends in other classes since groups can't mingle. They submit to daily temperature checks, extensive and aggressive cleaning routines, they don't get to see the smiles of their teachers and friends, they don't get to play musical instruments or sing in music class. They're missing out on after-school activities and NORMAL interactions with friends and classmates (play dates are pretty much out the window). No field trips. No school assemblies. No NORMALCY.

Personally, my friendships have suffered as well. The division caused by the Governor's constant statements like, "Who wants to kill Grandma" have created a pervasive atmosphere of division and distrust all over the state.

You don't have to look far to see the devastating effects. News story after news story about another teen committing suicide, drug overdoses have skyrocketed, mental health is on the

decline. How long will we sit idly by and allow these mandates and restrictions to continue?
WHERE IS THE EMERGENCY?!?

I support SB22 because it helps restore the balance of power in our state. We as Ohioans need to ensure that this gross overreach of power can never happen again. It is now 327 days into “15 days to flatten the curve.” THREE HUNDRED TWENTY-SEVEN.

We can't take it anymore. The fear-mongering, the data manipulation, the never-ending curfews and restrictions on our daily lives. All for a virus that has a survival rate well over 99.9% for the majority of the population. And for kids? Well, they're statistically more likely to be struck by lightning than die of Covid. Our hospitals aren't overwhelmed. People aren't dying in the streets. Again, WHERE is the emergency? Please, return the balance of power and bring an end to the mandates and regulations. Bring back normalcy to our kids. I respectfully ask that you vote YES on SB22. Thank you.