

Dear Members of the Ohio Senate,

I am asking you to vote in favor of SB22 because of the impact that Governor DeWine and the Ohio Department of Health's guidance and regulations are having on thousands of students and athletes in Ohio.

My name is Natalie Hunter, and I am in eighth grade. I go to Lexington Junior High in Richland County and I am a part of the district's state renowned cross-country program. When I was in seventh grade, in 2019, our girls' Jr. High team won the state meet. As a team we believed that if we worked hard, we could win again in 2020, despite losing our top runner, who was moving on to the high school team. When things shut down in the spring, I knew that in order for our team to accomplish that goal, I would have to do many things on my own. I started running every day and lifting regularly. I did everything I was told. I put my mask up, I kept my distance, and I sacrificed fun things that always brought our team together. We had no team meals, we did away with team bonding activities, and we spread out during workouts. Everything I did, I kept in mind that goal that I had set for myself. I worked to keep my teammates' spirits up, as well as mine. I worked to encourage everyone to do their best and give all their efforts to get that state title once again.

With all that I did, something completely out of my control happened. I found out a student who sat at my lunch table tested positive just a few days before the state meet. I was worried that at any moment I would be sent home, but I still held onto hope that I would be able to run. I still held onto hope that they would not take away my dream and feat of holding that title once again. At the end of that day, myself and 6 of my teammates were contact traced, sent home, and told we would not be able to run. Over 70 of my classmates were also quarantined. I

was absolutely devastated. I could not fathom how one person could take away everything I had worked for, for months. Everyone told me that there was nothing they could do. I struggled to eat, I struggled to sleep, and I struggled to do my work. My grades dropped dramatically, and I felt the weight of everything come crashing down. My parents fought for me and my teammates to run, but the school was not willing to fight for us.

Had Governor DeWine's guidelines and regulations not been in place I would have been able to run and my parents would not have been put in the position that they were. I never experienced any symptoms and neither did any of my teammates. And if one quarantine wasn't enough, I was quarantined a second time, a few weeks later, for a student that I sat behind in class. I missed two weeks of my swim season, which was crucial to my growth because the season had already been shortened. Again, I had zero symptoms, only mental health issues that come with taking away an athlete's time to compete and practice for no reason. I still worry that as track starts, I may be quarantined again, that they might take away what I work for, what I put my time and energy into.

The guidance from the governor also led my school district to go remote from Thanksgiving through MLK Jr. Day. Through all this my grades have plummeted, and I am still trying to bring them back up to where they were. I went from an A, B student to a student that is struggling to maintain a C in some of my classes. All of this is so hard for me to accept. I am a student who has only missed one day of school in the past four years. I am active, I take my vitamins, eat healthy, and do everything I need to do to stay healthy. Quarantining healthy students makes no sense and we have never done anything like this for any virus in the past. Despite people telling Governor DeWine this, he sits unmoving, unwilling to look at the facts. I know of zero students in my district who have even been hospitalized with this virus and the data

shows that very few in the entire state have been hospitalized. The virus does not target our age group, but the regulations have targeted our mental health, and educational and extra-curricular opportunities. This will impact my generation for years to come, and I find myself and my classmates struggling to have hope that Governor DeWine will bring all of this to an end anytime soon. My classmates and I need you to do whatever you can balance out the Governor's power and bring an end to these harmful policies.

Thank you for your time -

Natalie Hunter