

Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Good afternoon Madam Chair Roegner, Vice-chair McColley, and Ranking Member Craig, and the Honorable Members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee: Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today.

My name is Laura Molnar. I live in northwest Columbus and I am writing in support of Senate Bill 22.

I remember when my oldest child was born, my mother said to me, "You are all that stands between her and the world." I didn't quite understand what she meant that day, but today, eleven years and two additional children later, I understand being my children's advocate more than ever. The repercussions of our Governor taking complete control of our State's operation without any checks or balances have been terrifying to watch. I have grave concerns for our future and the future of my children.

I will be the first to tell you that in early March I fully supported the Governor and his state of emergency response to Covid-19. I felt that it was smart to take proactive measures to keep all Ohioans safe. My family and I did all that we were asked to do--we followed the guidelines to help "flatten the curve." As we rolled into late spring, I started to take note that we had more and more authority exercised over us, but we were in no way being asked to take personal responsibility for our own health, such as eating healthy foods, exercising, and simply practicing good hygiene. I started asking myself, "if this virus is as dangerous as the TV says it is, why aren't people voluntarily enacting all of these so-called safety measures so they don't get sick? Why does the Government have to convince people to do these things?" I wondered why one man was allowed to unilaterally decide how we interpreted the data coming in regarding Covid-19. Even if this virus were as deadly as we all feared, was it even CONSTITUTIONAL to allow this type of dictatorship?

When Governor DeWine closed the playgrounds that were outside, in fresh air, with warm sunshine capable of killing a virus, I finally realized that this is no longer about our health. This is about control.

Let me be clear: I believe Covid-19 is a real virus with real implications for certain individuals. I believe we need to redirect our efforts to protecting those most at risk, but that is a topic for another day.

I've watched Ohio become utterly destroyed over the last year. The closures of schools and non-essential businesses, as well as the recommendations to close churches....These closures have all had devastating effects. I have watched so many businesses fall in my local community. I have talked to bar and restaurant owners whose lives have been destroyed. They cannot stay afloat when operating at half-capacity with a curfew on top of it. I have friends whose children were suicidal due to the lockdowns. I have friends who have lost jobs, homes, and ended their marriages. My own children's mental health is suffering because of the constant rhetoric- pushed on TV and radio and even the freeway signage- of fear, sickness and isolation.

I have family and friends who live in utter terror of leaving their home, and why? Because of a Governor who says a hospital with ONE Covid-19-positive patient in an ICU with zero other patients is an ICU with 100% Covid-19 patients. Because of a Governor who allows a county with less cases than another to be color-coded purple due to a flaw in the way the map works. (By the way, where are the *green* counties?) Because of a Governor who says we cannot celebrate holidays with our families because we might kill Grandma. Doesn't Grandma get to decide for herself what risk she'd like to take? Don't grandkids deserve to see a welcoming Grandma without the Governor shaming them for it? Didn't Governor DeWine himself visit a newborn grandchild in the hospital when no one else could?

We cannot allow one person to have complete control over our state, which has happened for almost one full year now. The emergency, if there ever was one, is long since past. It is time for the power to return to the People, where it belongs. The Governor and ODH should be required to approve their emergency order actions through both the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives, through which the People have a voice.

I am asking you to support Senate Bill 22 with a YES vote.

Thank you for your time.

Laura Molnar