

Senate Bill 22 Proponent Testimony  
Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021  
Barry Sheets, legislative consultant, Health Freedom Ohio

Chair Roegner, vice-chair McColley, ranking member Craig and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 22, a measure that is designed to ensure a proper balance of accountability in the face of a public health emergency.

I am here today representing Health Freedom Ohio, an Ohio-based nonprofit who is committed to raising awareness about health choices and works to preserve the fundamental human right to health freedom. I also speak for the Center for Christian Virtue, whose mission includes efforts to ensure that our representative form of government operates with transparency and is accountable to the people.

We applaud Senators Johnson and McColley and their cosponsors for bringing Senate Bill 22 forward. As we have witnessed through the last 11 months, there is a pressing need to clarify and draw Constitutional boundaries around the statutes relating to public health states of emergency. Senate Bill 22 does just that, by first removing the “ultimate” authority from the Executive Branch and tempering that with reasonable accountability measures which involve the review and approval of the elected representatives of the people of Ohio both through the joint Ohio Health Oversight and Advisory Committee, and through the option of both chambers adopting resolutions regarding the extent and duration of any orders under these powers.

Additionally, the bill sets forth clear language to further refine to whom the quarantine and isolation powers of the Department of Health actually apply, rather than the previously-experienced blanket lockdowns, designations of essential and non-essential businesses, or current patchwork color coding system used to restrict entire counties or regions or certain business types.

Nowhere in this bill does it prohibit either the Governor or the Department of Health from actually acting in order to address an emerging public health crisis, but it will engage the Legislature in a significant way. Other provisions of the bill to ensure that there is open communication between the Executive and the Legislature during the crisis on a daily basis are necessary to maintain both transparency and the appropriate accountability the people of Ohio expect from our elected officials.

Senate Bill 22 is a reasonable means of maintaining the delicate balance between the need to address real health crises when they arise, and the inalienable freedoms of the people of this state to live, move, and do business. We ask that this panel favorably report this measure at your earliest opportunity, and I would be happy to take questions from the committee.