

February 1, 2021

Chairman Roegner, Vice Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the State and Local Government Committee:

I am testifying today in favor of SB 22 as an Ohio resident deeply concerned about the actions of Governor Mike DeWine, his emergency orders, and the dire effects all this has had on all of us. Following is my own personal account of how I and my family have been affected by Governor DeWine's emergency orders, which have caused me and my family harm, in particular his mask order.

I myself have been refused medical care due to the fact that I have a medical issue and cannot wear a mask. Wearing a mask causes me to be deprived of oxygen, as I am asthmatic and also have damaged lungs (from surviving A.R.D.S. in 2002). I get very short of breath and pass out; therefore, I do NOT wear a mask, period. I was scheduled for my annual eye examination in December, but my eye doctor will not allow anyone in the office who does not wear a mask (face shields are not acceptable, nor are medical exemptions). I really need to be seen every year. I have had 4 eye procedures since 2011, 2 surgeries for early cataracts, and 2 posterior capsulotomy laser procedures. I also have lattice degeneration of the retina in both eyes, as well as type II diabetes, and I need that annual exam with dilation of my eyes to allow my retinas to be examined for tearing. I was not able to have this done in December, and since there is no end date given for the mask order, I do not know when I will be able to have it done in the future. What if I develop a tear in my retina? Am I supposed to potentially lose my vision just because I cannot wear a mask? This is just plain wrong.

I am discriminated against when it comes to shopping, again because I cannot wear a mask, and many businesses will not admit anyone not wearing a mask, even if you have a medical exemption. I do NOT have COVID. I cannot give another person a disease I do NOT have. I am sick and tired of being treated like a walking disease factory. This is discrimination, and it is illegal and morally wrong.

I was forced to miss several of my granddaughter's soccer games last year, again, because I cannot wear a mask. My son-in-law also missed some games, as my young grandson (3 years old) refuses to wear a mask, and therefore he had to stay home with him while my daughter attended. This was grossly unfair to the families of the players, to not allow them to attend and support their children/grandchildren, unless they were willing to put on a mask while OUTSIDE. I see absolutely NO REASON for ANYONE to wear a mask outside, especially when people are socially distanced and not in close contact with others.

My young granddaughter is forced daily to experience oxygen deprivation of her developing brain, by being forced into a mask simply to attend school. Her school does not allow ANY mask breaks except when the children are eating lunch. This is LEGALIZED CHILD ABUSE, and it will lead to a generation of brain-damaged children if it does not end very soon. Forced masking of our children, social distancing

and restrictions on in-person school attendance has already led to an increased rate of depression and anxiety, and an increased suicide rate among our children. The damage to their mental health will take YEARS to overcome, and in some cases, will never be repaired.

None of Governor DeWine's emergency orders were voted on by our General Assembly. This amounts to a one-man RULE of our state, and that is NOT what our state Constitution spells out. Where does our Constitution give the governor the authority to close down a privately-owned business, if that business is legally operating and NOT breaking the law? What gives the governor the authority to decide which businesses are "essential" and which are not? They are ALL ESSENTIAL to those who own them, or work for them. Where in our Constitution does it give our governor the power to tell people that they CANNOT work to provide a living for themselves and their families? Or to force us to wear something under the guise of a "health order" (that is NOT a LAW)? And WHY is he using OUR TAX DOLLARS to pay for what amounts to "snitches" in our places of business that are open, looking for anyone who is NOT wearing a mask? How is THAT CONSTITUTIONAL? For that matter, how is it CONSTITUTIONAL to force businesses to enforce his orders that are NOT LAWS, under threats of monetary fines and possible closings? The police in many jurisdictions will not enforce his mask order for that specific reason, because it is NOT a LAW. A deputy sheriff in my county specifically told me that "we enforce the LAW, not mandates".

Our governor does not have the Constitutional authority to ignore the General Assembly. It is the job of the General Assembly to make laws in Ohio. It's the job of the governor to see that the laws are enforced fairly. The governor doesn't have the Constitutional authority to issue a "mandate" and have it enforced as if it was a properly-enacted law. If he wants something to become LAW, he needs to propose that to the General Assembly and allow the Constitutional process to work. He just can't create a LAW with a stroke of his pen. That's not how our system of government works.

SB 22 restores the balance of power to where it should be, between the three, COEQUAL branches of government, and finally gives a VOICE to the PEOPLE of Ohio via their legislators during a declared emergency. The General Assembly should NEVER have been bypassed during this time. Our businesses, our economy, our social and emotional well-being and mental health, and the future of our children is on the line. Our state is dying. It's time for this to stop.

Please stand up and protect our God-given rights, personal liberties, and the future of our state by voting YES on SB 22!

Thank you,

Lynn Withrow
Belpre, Ohio