



**Senate Bill 22 – Interested Party Testimony**  
**Senate Government Oversight & Reform Committee**  
**Robert Wyllie, MD**  
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Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Government Oversight & Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony for Senate Bill 22, which would create the Ohio Health Oversight and Advisory Committee. My name is Dr. Robert Wyllie, and I am Chief of Medical Operations at Cleveland Clinic. Additionally, I serve as the clinical lead for Ohio's Zone 1, created in response to the ongoing pandemic and which includes 21 counties in Northern Ohio.

The heart of Cleveland Clinic's mission is "patients first." Cleveland Clinic dedicates our work each day to the care and healthcare journey of every patient. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Cleveland Clinic has treated nearly twenty percent of hospitalized COVID-19 patients in the state and fifty percent of patients in Northeast Ohio.

COVID-19 brought with it many unknowns, yet quickly revealed its deadly outcomes and the swiftness of infection. As the pandemic began, hospitals throughout the state have identified and treated Ohio's most vulnerable patients. Additionally, they worked collaboratively to address care issues, treatment protocols, surge planning, and personal protective equipment (PPE) shortages. I work closely with my counterparts in Zones 2 and 3, holding virtual meetings several times a week to review the most recent COVID-19 response protocols and make adjustments as our knowledge and experience grows.

At the outset, Cleveland Clinic commenced a number of immediate steps to ensure our hospitals were safe for patients and our caregivers, including limiting access into our facilities, requiring face masks, restricting visitation, instituting remote work, canceling public events, supporting the suspension of non-essential procedures, shifting to virtual care and requiring temperature checks for all who entered our doors.

During the early critical stages of the COVID-19 outbreak and continuing over the last year, Cleveland Clinic joined other health systems across the state to provide clinical input to Governor DeWine and his team as well as members of the General Assembly. We applaud the leadership of the Governor and the General Assembly for their guidance throughout these many months. The thoughtful efforts of Ohio leaders have saved lives.

As the important discussions commence around Senate Bill 22, Cleveland Clinic recognizes and respects the legislature's authority and its obligation to carefully weigh the wide-ranging needs of the state during a health crisis. We appreciate that balance is important; our prime focus is our patients, and concurrently we must be strong stewards of our financial well-being to carry out the responsibility of investing in and providing world-class care.

The pandemic has presented the most significant lessons in public health of the past century. As we look back, the world was faced with many unknowns and even more challenges. Nearly a



year later, questions continue to arise as the pandemic progresses and vaccines are introduced, new variants appear and the effects of COVID-19 on the human body are researched. We are constantly acquiring new knowledge and applying lessons-learned to the care and treatment of our patients.

To facilitate a nimble response, Cleveland Clinic respectfully suggests adding language to Senate Bill 22 that would encourage members of the General Assembly to seek and consider the expertise of Ohio's distinguished medical professionals for guidance now and in the future regarding complex public health matters that come before the Committee. This could be in the form of ex-officio members of the Committee from the physician and public health communities and providing opportunities for testimony.

Cleveland Clinic would be a willing partner, providing our best medical experts to assist the proposed Committee, now and in the future. It is critical that healthcare professionals have input into the process during Committee deliberations.

Thank you for allowing Cleveland Clinic the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on Senate Bill 22. We are available to respond to any questions that may arise.