



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Zanesville-Muskingum County

Our Mission

Prevent. Promote. Protect. Public Health is our Passion!

February 9, 2021

Dear Senator Roegner:

On behalf of the Zanesville-Muskingum County Health Department, I write to ask that this letter be submitted to the Senate Government Reform and Oversight Committee in opposition to Senate Bill 22.

The bill, as introduced, would severely restrict the authority of the Director of Health to respond in a timely and efficient way to outbreaks of communicable disease and other public health emergencies that threaten the health and safety of Ohioans.

As the public health system, both state and local, works diligently with all partners to make our way out of this once-in-a-century pandemic, the effort has and will continue to be an "all hands on deck" situation for the foreseeable future. Now is not the time to strip the state health director of any authority that might be necessary to limit the spread of this virus that has resulted in the death of over 11,000 Ohioans to date. Now is the time to focus on Ohio's mass vaccination efforts, described by most experts as the most significant logistical challenge ever known, to try to achieve herd immunity levels of protection for Ohioans.

This bill will also impact the Director's authority in times beyond the declaration of a public health emergency, such as communicable disease outbreaks that impact multiple local jurisdictions. Recent examples include: Clostridium difficile outbreaks in multiple long-term care facilities, a recent foodborne outbreak that originated in a meat packaging plant where product was shipped to many locations statewide, and a Legionnaires disease outbreak in a brand new hospital in Central Ohio.

In order to protect the public's health, our system needs to be able to respond immediately to threats with science-based mitigation tools that are recommended by experts to reduce the negative health consequences of the event. Please do not pass a bill that will tie up the Director's authority in a cumbersome legislative process that includes an oversight committee and concurrent resolutions by both chambers.

Sincerely,

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Health Commissioner
Zanesville-Muskingum County Health Department

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