



HAMILTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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Dear Senator Roegner:

As health commissioner of Hamilton County, Ohio, I write to ask that this message be submitted to the Senate Government Reform and Oversight Committee in opposition to Senate Bill 22.

As a county health commissioner faced with a novel pandemic, the ability to act quickly and decisively to protect public health is of paramount importance. In early 2020, as the details of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (the virus that causes COVID-19) were unfolding, the lack of information and data about the virus' behavior and activity hand-cuffed healthcare professionals.

Because of the ability to react to public health threats invested in the Governor and Ohio Department of Health, Ohio acted quickly and decisively to limit the spread of COVID-19 during the crucial period when the country was just learning about the virus, its control and treatment.

Contrast this to present times. We now have a greater understanding of the virus, its spread, preventive and treatment modalities. It is frightening to imagine what may have transpired during the early phases of COVID-19 had we not acted to slow the spread of the virus. Hospitalizations and ultimately deaths would have spiraled out of control early in the pandemic, as so little was known about treatment.

Public health must maintain the ability to act quickly and decisively in order to protect vulnerable populations. We are able to close food service facilities demonstrating health-threatening practices. We can limit carriers of tuberculosis and other diseases to protect public health. Scientific best practices have taught us that we can protect those either directly or indirectly exposed through testing, quarantine and isolation. These practices, as documented for decades by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, serve as the foundation for protecting public health.

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.

Respectfully,

Greg Kesterman
Hamilton County Health Commissioner

