

Dear Senators and Representatives of the State of Ohio,

Please consider this testimony with respect to Senate Bill 22 which was introduced on January 26, 2021. This bill appears to be intended to severely harm the state of Ohio, and the good people who live here, in the case of a public health emergency. The state of Ohio has a public health department led and staffed by educated, qualified health professionals. This bill proposes to override their work with a legislative committee comprised of well-intentioned legislators whose prime areas of education and occupation are NOT in the field of public health.

It is the legislators desire to be able to override executive orders that have been issued after careful review of both the science of a public health emergency, the economic and social factors that are being affected by that public health emergency, and the economic and social factors that will be affected by the executive order.

For the most part, Ohio has had excellent communication from the Governor throughout this most recent public emergency. When it broke down, it was primarily because key people were harassed by others and became unable to effectively do their jobs. There have been complaints that the advice has changed over time. People who understand science understand why – the more we learn, the more we are able to adapt. A year ago, COVID-19 was an unknown. To state the obvious – some factors take time to learn. Will people who have survived COVID-19 become immune? If so, for how long? How long will the protective effects of a vaccine last? We cannot possibly know the answer to these questions until time has PASSED.

Objections that I have heard about current policies are shallow at best. Our legislators need to take actions to protect themselves and others. They know they should be wearing masks to protect themselves and others – yet they do not. They know they should stay 6 feet apart from one another as they work – yet they have not created ways to do so as they legislate. Eleven thousand Ohioans have died from COVID-19, 47,000 have been ill. Likely these are low estimates. We should not weaken our ability to respond to this and other public health emergencies.

I want to be proud to say that I am from Ohio. I want to show how well we worked together to overcome the adversity of COVID-19. Last spring we started out that way – had we continued our practices – we may have been well through this already and not have lost so many loved ones. Sadly, too many people who were inconvenienced by careful practices are now fighting for their comfort, not for all of our health and well being. The quicker, now and in future emergencies, that we are able to resolve the emergency, the quicker we can return to “normal living” and the quicker we can restore our economy. Let the professionals do their jobs, and keep the legislators out of it. Do not pass SB 22.

Thank you,

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