

SB 22 Opposition Testimony

Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking member Craig, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee:

My name is Sarah Barry. I think it should be obvious to everybody that if SB 22 had been law this time last year that the emergency orders issued by Mike DeWine would have been almost certainly overturned in a matter of days, if not hours. This bill undeniably limits the authority of the Ohio Department of Health. The creation of a new committee is also problematic, as health policy and oversight could be controlled by anti-vax legislators in much the same way that certain committees are currently being controlled/influenced.

It is very troubling to know that the anti-vax group Health Freedom Ohio (HFO) seems to carry such weight in the Statehouse when their anti-science beliefs are clear. Just weeks before a few HFO members appeared to give proponent testimony for SB 22, dozens of them gathered in a small barn with no masks and no social distancing to hear Andrew Wakefield tell the audience that "vaccination is a bust". You cannot invite the literal father of the modern anti-vax moment to your event and be surprised that people call you anti-vax. By the same token, you cannot be a legislator who actively works with HFO or similar groups and be surprised when people also call you anti-vax.

This coordination is especially troublesome as HFO made significant effort to censor my testimony last year on SB 311. As time has gone on I have also experienced intense body shaming and harassment from people tied to HFO. As a proud citizen of Ohio, I will continue to doubt the need for SB 22 and the integrity of the Statehouse as long as these people are the ones forcing their will on the rest of Ohio.

Thank you for your time.

-Sarah Barry