

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig, and the Honored members of the government oversight and reform committee, my name is Jeri Marek. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony. I am a fifty-three year old grandmother who left Arizona in 2016 with two disabled grandchildren of whom I was raising at the time to come back home to Ohio to reunite with my family, the state I was born and raised, in hopes of starting my life over. I suffer with C-PTSD and anxiety from the trauma of both mental and physical abuse. In 2015, while trying to care for these two grandchildren I had been strangled several times, the last of which was the scariest because I don't remember much of it other than everything turning black. I have worked in transportation in the past for fifteen years for three separate school districts and although enjoyed my carrier, decided to subcontract with Lyft after purchasing a vehicle for work. I started with Lyft in 2019 and have absolutely loved working with the public and being able to work on my own time. I worked afternoons and nights because those are the hours that kept me the busiest. I was just getting my life back on track when Covid19 hit our state. My mother needed help with my father when he became ill in May of 2020. He passed away in June of 2020 due to an untreated UTI. I was going to go back to work after helping my mother get her affairs in order, when Lyft and Governor Dewine put mask mandates in effect. With the medical conditions I suffer with, I cannot wear a mask, a necklace, a turtleneck, or anything else that makes me feel like my airway is being restricted due to the trauma. Even though Governor Dewine's mask mandate has exemptions for people with physical or mental disorders, it has been my experience, with any business I have tried to enter, I have been told, to bad, it doesn't matter and discriminated against horribly. I can't even go into a grocery store to buy food, they don't care about the exemptions and I do carry a note from my doctor. I waited two months to go see a specialist for a UTI superbug, but when I arrived at Altman hospital, was turned away from the people downstairs because I cannot wear a mask. I had to reschedule and wait another two months to see this specialist again, I did not go because I will only get turned away again and it's not worth the anxiety for me. I worry I will become sepsis with this UTI superbug and get sick and pass from the same thing my father did. People are dying because of not wanting to, or not being able to go to their doctors because of these restrictions. I know, I am one who lost my father. I would have been to work months ago, but worry still if I do, if there will even be work because of the governor's curfew. If people have a curfew, I won't have customers. I have fought off depression over the months I have sat in the house and rotted, it's only by my faith in God I have survived thus far. I had to make the terrible decision to let one of my grandchildren go live with another family member because it is all too much for me and now her and her brother are separated by a half hour drive. I seriously hope you can emphasize with someone that doesn't walk in your shoes. I've been screamed at by other people in stores about not having a mask even before the stores started kicking me out. I have worked in the medical field in the past, and know masks don't protect you from viruses anyway. Virus particles are way smaller than the holes in the material on masks and it sure has made people angry at me because I can't wear one. That would be like making people angry at anyone with a medical condition that wanted to shop, why am I any different. It's hard enough fighting the triggers I have from the trauma and now, if I go out, I have to get traumatized all over again. So I stay home or go check on my mother and help her. I have done what I can while stuck at home, like crochet scarves for charity for the homeless, even though I've been called lazy, I don't want to go back to work. I've been called Hitler because I'm selfish and don't care about anyone else's life! In reality, I do care and have kept my distance from others in the stores on the few occasions I was able to enter. Please, listen to my cries!! It's "just a mask" isn't so much "just a mask" for me!! I only wish people could feel the way I would feel putting one on, or see how cruel and discriminated against I get. Please understand how urgent changes need to be and thank you for taking the time to listen.

Sincerely,
A proud Ohioan,
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