

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig, and the Honored Members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee:

I want to take this opportunity to share with you the effect the governor's mandates and restrictions has had on me in regards to the work that I have done for 22 + years. I work in the field of Early Intervention. I used to visit families of infants and toddlers in their homes. These infants and toddlers have developmental delays or have been diagnosed with a medical condition that has or will lead to a delay in development. I receive a fair wage for the work I do, but it isn't the money that is the true reward. It is wonderful to see these children grow but also to see the parent or caregiver grow in their role as well. We don't directly work with the children but instead work with the children and the parents. I share my knowledge and skills with parents so that they can continue to be the best support for their child. This is an evidenced based model of service delivery. Research shows that parents have the greatest impact on the development of their children. The best part of this model is that we, as interventionists work with the family within their natural environment. We build on their interactions and routines with the goal of enhancing their children's abilities to use their skills functionally across settings and situations. As a child's participation, independence, and engagement in his / her daily routines increase, the severity of his /her disability decreases.

I stated above that I used to visit families in their home, well that was nearly 11 months ago. Since the lockdown our "visits" are virtual. Is it doable? Somewhat. Is it ideal? Not in the least. I don't get to see the children much as it isn't easy to capture a child on Zoom. I don't see the family participate in their normal routines. I often get turned off when the child pushes buttons on the tablet or computer and even

took a few “rides” when the child ran off with mom’s phone. The greatest struggle for many years have been parents dealing with technology, in regards to keeping TV, phones / tablets and computers away from their child. Development, especially language requires interactions between people. People in person, not via a screen. Harm is being done to these young people. Parents are trying to compensate for lack of play dates with other children and those in childcare that are seeing only the masked faces of their teachers. I have many parents that would like the option of in home visits. Many of my parents have already had the virus. Knowing now the risk and danger of COVID-19 (not much worse than seasonal flu for most people), I am not afraid. I have worked with these little ones for years and am aware of how easily they spread colds and flu, but not COVID. My passion for the work I used to do is gone, and I struggle each day to get through numerous Zoom visits sitting for hours at my computer. I so much want to provide the service that parents are entitled to. These Early Intervention services are only from birth until the child’s third birthday. These months of services being implemented in an inadequate manner is a large portion of a toddlers life. Gains in these first 3 years are critical.

Please vote yes on SB 22 to stop the harm being done to children, especially those at the youngest of age and with disabilities. The citizens of Ohio are all suffering in some way due to the actions our governor has taken to manage this virus. This emergency ended months ago as hospitals were not overwhelmed with patients suffering from COVID. Trying to stop a respiratory virus from spreading is impossible, if not insane.

Respectfully Yours,
Dolores Sherba