

11/16/2020

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairman Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee: Thank you for allowing me proponent testimony for HB 618.

When I decided to buy my business a little over two years ago, I knew that I was taking a monumental, calculated risk. I knew that I risked customer service issues, staffing problems, weather crises, and a million other things that can tank a business. I never dreamed I would be fighting an uphill battle against an overzealous Governor. Governor DeWine's failed leadership and foolhardy attempts at manhandling Ohioans into compliance has cost my business \$257,045.79 so far this year. Mine is a business that has been around for a little over 40 years. My restaurant, located in Waynesville, Ohio is where families come to mark occasions – birthdays, bridal showers, and even wakes after funeral services. People come from miles around to shop in our small town, and dine in our quaint restaurants. We feed farmers and plumbers, electricians and shop owners. The people who work in my restaurant are people from a small rural community who have lived and loved here for generations. When we were forced to close in the spring, not a one of my employees knew anyone who had the virus or even any reason to suspect that they may have had the virus. And yet, due to our Governor's capricious edict, I had to explain to thirty seven people that I had no idea what was going to happen to a business that had survived forty years. I didn't know how they would make car, rent, or house payments. Frankly, I didn't know myself how I would do those things in the face of an open-ended and wholly unnecessary shutdown. In the nine months that we've been flattening the two week curve, not a one of my employees has tested positive for the virus. I am thankful for that, and have already started thinking about how I will talk to my employees about a potential shutdown that could begin this Thursday and go until some indeterminate point in the future.

In the beginning, the Governor clearly didn't know the difference between a scalpel and a machine gun. For the greater part of a year, he seemingly worked to become a self appointed media darling and completely abdicated the responsibility of actively governing the state. The leverage he has employed is ill-advised at best, and ineffective to say the least. While the Governor would take credit for various stages of success in flattening the curve, the only thing that has ever brought about the results he so desperately seeks, are when Ohioans are armed with credible information that informs their own good choices about caring for themselves and their loved ones. The Governor seems to believe that closing bars and restaurants and making sure stores have one directional shopping lanes will stop the virus in it's tracks. The Governor has now gone so far as to attempt to limit how many people we are permitted to have in our own private homes. Because the Governor intuitively knows that he cannot legislate what people do in their own homes, again we are facing a shutdown. Again I will have employees who can tell you many stories about the inefficient and outright failed operations of our unemployment system. Again I will know people struggling with substance abuse and domestic violence due to the unbearable stress mounted on their shoulders by a Governor who knows not the first thing about leadership during this time. Again, I will wait to hear about some stimulus package or other that does nothing more than either return my own money to me, or advances money that the government does not have in it's coffers in a hope of propping small businesses up. The only place that the money that can save small businesses exists is in the free market. Last Thursday, the Governor gave a menacing speech in which he threatened to close bars and restaurants in one week's time. Immediately, my sales dropped by 30%. Our Governor absolutely needs to have restrictions placed on his power. Thank you for your time.

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