

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and honorable members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for your time and attention as I give opposition testimony. As always, I am here today representing nobody but myself.

The Ohio Department of Health is a nonpartisan agency that acts in the best interests of the health of all Ohioans. Throughout the pandemic they have issued multiple orders with the aim of reducing the spread of COVID-19. HB 618 would completely strip the ODH's ability to issue timely and decisive orders to protect Ohioans from contagious diseases.

Although some initially derided an early statement by former ODH Director Dr. Acton, we are closer than we've ever been to hitting ten thousand new cases a day as was once predicted. One can imagine how much quicker we would have reached that number if the initial orders issued had been subject to the provisions in HB 618. Yes, the people of Ohio elected you all to represent us, but we also elected Governor DeWine to represent us. I think his consistently high approval rating in an era of politics most people consider to be at an all-time high for divisiveness is proof that most Ohioans are happy with the balance of powers *as they are*.

Public health is not your enemy. I urge a "no" vote on HB 618. Thank you.