

CUYAHOGA COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

YOUR TRUSTED SOURCE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION

March 23, 2021

The Honorable Mike DeWine
Governor, State of Ohio
The Ohio Statehouse
78 S. High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Governor DeWine,

On behalf of the Cuyahoga County Board of Health and the 883,000 Greater Clevelanders whose health we are sworn to protect, I would like to send our sincere thanks for your opposition to Senate Bill 22 and your pledge to veto this legislation.

I have had the distinct honor of joining you in the early hours every Monday morning throughout this long and painful pandemic, along with my colleagues in the 113 local health departments in Ohio. Under your leadership, in concert with the tried and true public health interventions of isolation and quarantine, masking, social distancing and restriction of large gatherings, countless Ohio lives have been saved. Clearly, we have prevented the worst possible scenarios that all of us feared might come to pass.

Over 32 years of public health experience, I have responded to many public health emergencies, including the post-9/11 anthrax attacks, threats of bioterrorism that led to the smallpox vaccination campaign, the 2009 H1N1 Novel Influenza pandemic and the Ebola virus. Clearly, SARS-CoV-2 is the mother of them all. Infectious diseases have been with man since the beginning of time causing serious outbreaks of diseases, such as measles, hepatitis A-B-C, botulism, Norovirus, HIV, meningitis, mumps, pertussis, plague, rabies, tuberculosis, and viral hemorrhagic fevers. Indeed, even amidst the COVID-19 response, local health departments across Ohio are monitoring travelers returning from countries where Ebola is spreading, to prevent transmission here at home. After all, this is what we do.

We have grave concerns that if Senate Bill 22 were to become law, our ability to protect Ohioans from these ever-present threats would be paralyzed. The power of public health prevention lies in the rapid recognition, evaluation and control of infectious diseases. Enacting Senate Bill 22 would be akin to taking away a fire hose from a fireman, eliminating their essential ability to stop the spread of the flames. Similarly, if individuals were to refuse quarantine and isolation orders amid the clear and

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Terrence M. Allan, R.S., M.P.H. Health Commissioner

present danger of an infectious disease threat, local health departments would be powerless to stop the spread. Speed is the name of the game in our epidemiologic response plans and without these essential tools, the invisible domino effect of transmission would run rampant and the lives of Ohioans would be unnecessarily placed in harm's way.

In an increasingly global society facing the inevitability of future pandemics on the horizon, we need to be prepared for the worst. Consequently, we urge you to request that the Ohio General Assembly not attempt an override of your Senate Bill 22 veto. To do so would result in grave, unintended consequences in the protection of the health and safety of all Ohioans. COVID-19 has extracted a dear price from our society over the last year. It is important for all of us to recognize that without the vital public health tools of quarantine and isolation at our side, the ravages of this horrible pandemic would have been more than we could bear.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Allan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Terry Allan, MPH
Health Commissioner

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