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March 23, 2021

The Honorable Mike DeWine
77 S. High St., 30th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor DeWine,

I would like to thank you for your veto of SB22 and offer my gratitude for your support of local public health. In addition, I am humbled by your continued work and dedication to keeping Ohioans safe and healthy. Local public health is the cornerstone entity responding to threats from diseases and disorders that limit the quality and length of life of individuals within their communities. Local public health orders are crucial tools for protecting and saving lives. Timely action through an investigation of public health threats are vital to ensuring these situations do not grow in urgency or worsen. SB 22 will result in ineffective public health interventions pending review by officials with little or no affiliation to public health science. Problems that arise will be allowed to worsen before action could be taken to contain and mitigate the threat. There are other consequences and issues tied to SB22 that would affect public health response capability beyond public health orders.

If your veto is overridden by the General Assembly, local public health will be unable to adequately use isolation and quarantine measures to save lives and protect the community. COVID-19 is only one disease against which quarantine and isolation is a vital tool. SB22 would also prevent this tool from being used for diseases like Tuberculosis, measles, and others. Another concern related to SB22 is the perpetuation of health inequities due to limitations on the use of science based measures for population disease control, contributing to more harm to those most in need. These measures have included using public health interventions to protect communities from the Chipotle Outbreak in Northwest Ohio, the South Bass Island groundwater contamination, and the multi-county measles outbreak to name a few examples. If SB 22 is enacted, public health would be severely limited and possibly prevented from protecting those trusting in local health authorities to protect their families and lives.

Additional examples are too numerous to list, but the conclusion is if SB22 is enacted, the lifesaving and proactive community protection provided by local public health will be placed in a dangerous position. What is most needed right now is open dialogue and support for public health, not a dismantling of decades of proven science. Please continue the efforts to keep Ohioans safe and healthy.

Respectfully,

Eric J. Zgodzinski, DrPH, MPH, RS, CPH
Health Commissioner
Toledo Lucas County Health Department