



House State and Local Government Committee
Opponent Testimony – HB 90

Franklin County Board of Commissioners
Kevin L. Boyce, President
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Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity for the Franklin County Board of Commissioners to submit written testimony in opposition to House Bill 90.

Ohioans continue to face the unprecedented health and economic challenges arising from the coronavirus pandemic. These are indeed among the most acutely difficult times in recent memory, and we are working tirelessly as your local partners to do our part to address the needs of residents and businesses during this time.

We are deeply concerned that House Bill 90 proposes changes that will have broad reaching implications for the state health department's ability to coordinate investigation and management authority regarding communicable disease outbreaks and inserts a layered political process in the protection of public health. As we have learned through our collective response to COVID, effective management of a highly transmissible infectious disease requires a strong and responsive public health network at both the local and state levels, especially as it relates to future disease outbreaks affecting multiple jurisdictions. While we respect the role of the legislature in state governance, we ask you to consider reforms and resources that strengthen this infrastructure instead of hampering the ability of public health officials to deploy the tools and best practices long in place to execute the mission to protect the health of all Ohioans.

Long before the COVID-19 crisis hit, our Board of County Commissioners worked hand in hand with Franklin County Public Health (FCPH), other government partners, nonprofit organizations, and businesses to understand residents' needs and develop innovative responses to those needs at the individual and neighborhood levels. We pride ourselves in Franklin County on building public-private partnerships that grow and enrich our community, and through its licensing and community health work, FCPH is a crucial part of this fabric. We depend on FCPH effectively meeting its statutorily mandated responsibility to protect the public's health and work collaboratively with residents and businesses to respond to urgent needs, but this work in turn depends on a strong executive ODH foundation and statewide leadership, especially to address the spread of infectious disease which knows no county line or boundary. The work of public health is essential, in times of crisis and not, to ensuring a health workforce and thriving community, and we respectfully ask that you reject these proposed constraints on the Ohio Department of Health and our collective ability to respond to public health emergencies in our state.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.