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## MEMO

January 20, 2021

**TO:** Members of the Senate Health and Pensions Committee

**FROM:** Daniel Landon  
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**SUBJECT:** Missouri Hospital Association Comments on Public Health Authority Legislation

The Missouri Hospital Association offers the following comments to the Senate Health and Pensions Committee regarding Senate Bills 12, 20, 21, 31, 56, 67 and 68. The bills address a common theme of limiting the scope of authority of public health officials to restrict activity in specified settings such as private residences, businesses and churches.

As health care providers, MHA's member hospitals urge caution in limiting the capacity of public health to effectively manage and control declared public health emergencies. In the spring of 2020, strong state restrictions helped curb the pandemic sufficiently to permit a safe and controlled reopening. However, the COVID-19 virus subsequently surged, reaching unprecedented levels of infection and threatening to overwhelm hospitals in some regions. This jeopardized care for everyone seeking care in those communities. In some cases, public health authorities and local governments took important and appropriate actions to reduce COVID-19 transmission. They used evidence-driven public health protocols and tools to help curtail the crisis and safeguard their jurisdictions. During this time, scientific standards were evolving as to the spread and control of the virus. There is sentiment that some of these actions infringed upon Missourians' liberties, which is the policy issue before the General Assembly. However, as frontline practitioners, we urge careful attention to the need to balance between competing interests.

One of the bills being heard, Senate Bill 21, also imposes new state standards on hospital policies regarding visitation of pediatric or obstetrical patients. The proposed language raises questions and concerns about hospitals' ability to use safety and security protocols to protect the patients in their care. MHA would like to discuss those issues with the sponsor and committee.

dl/djb

c Senator Denny Hoskins  
Senator Mike Cierpiot  
Senator Cindy O'Laughlin  
Senator Rick Brattin