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MEMO

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TO: Members of the House Special Committee on Small Business

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 House Special Committee on Small Business regarding House Bills 75, 288, 392, 444, 572 and 602. The bills address a common theme of revising the procedural requirements or scope of authority of governmental officials to issue public health orders or ordinances.

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 for balance between competing interests.

dl/djb

c Rep. Mike Henderson
Rep. Mike McGirl
Rep. Ann Kelley (127)
Rep. Mike Haffner
Rep. Derek Grier