

## Citizens group files suit to end Gov. DeWine's emergency COVID-19 orders

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A group of eight Ohioans opposed to Gov. Mike DeWine's emergency orders dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak has filed a federal lawsuit seeking to end the regulations, including those that have shut down businesses and forced Ohioans to wear face masks.

"We believe that the response to COVID-19 has been the greatest fraud ever perpetrated on the American Public," said Thomas Renz, a Fremont, OH, attorney representing the coalition, Ohio Stands Up, in the suit filed in U.S. District Court in Toledo.

"The object of this legal action is to force the state to honor the constitution and to stop the lies, manipulation and fear-mongering intentionally being promoted by public health officials and elected officials."

In a 56-page lawsuit, Ohio Stands Up claims state officials have intentionally misled the public and overstated the seriousness of the virus. The manipulation, they argue, has hurt thousands of businesses, many who may never reopen, caused isolation leading to an increase in drug overdoses, suicides, domestic violence and child abuse, and caused suffering for those in hospitals and nursing homes barred from seeing loved ones.

"The state of Ohio has ignored fundamental constitutional rights for a virus that is no more dangerous than the seasonal flu," said co-counsel Robert Gargas.

The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court Northern District of Ohio. Attorneys said it is funded solely by Ohioans' contributions to the Ohio Stands Up organization.

Attorneys also pointed to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recent report that 94% of people who died from COVID-19 had other serious illnesses, suggesting they didn't die from the virus and the threat is overblown.

Those claims, however, have been debunked by fact-checkers who say the CDC statistic does not mean that 94% percent of people listed as COVID-19 deaths are listed incorrectly. It means 94 percent of people died of COVID-19 and something else.

Naming DeWine and Health Director Lance Himes as defendants, the lawsuit seeks damages of \$75,000 for each of the eight plaintiffs.

DeWine's spokesman Dan Tierney said the governor's office had no immediate comment to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit follows last month's filing of an impeachment resolution by a handful of conservative lawmakers filed to remove DeWine from office over how he has handled the coronavirus. Chances of the resolution passing are considered slim.

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