



OHIO STATE BAR
ASSOCIATION

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March 20, 2020

Governor Mike DeWine
77 South High Street, 30th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215-3431

Dear Governor DeWine:

Thank you for your steady leadership during this unprecedented public health crisis. Under your direction, Ohio has stood out among all states for its measured response and we stand ready to assist you in any way we can.

To that end, we are writing today to ask that as you contemplate future orders to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and further restrictions regarding the activities Ohio businesses, that you would deem legal services to be essential.

While you have taken positive steps to ensure the basic needs of Ohioans are met during this crisis, attorneys have a critical role to play in helping Ohioans access that assistance and to navigate legal issues (both pending and evolving) related to their health, personal safety and housing, not to mention their rights under the Ohio and U.S. Constitutions. Additionally, our attorneys are continuing to actively work with Ohio businesses as they face new and existential challenges so that when this crisis is over, they can get back up and running for the sake of their employees and our economy. While many lawyers can perform these services remotely and are leveraging technology to the extent they can, it is critical that they have the flexibility they need to best serve clients and help to keep the wheels of justice in motion.

As Chief Justice O'Connor said in the press conference on Thursday, access to courts may be limited but it cannot be eliminated, especially as it relates to emergency and time-sensitive legal matters. Lawyers are necessary and essential participants to ensuring the continued operation of the courts and the public's access to justice. We will continue to take steps, as our courts have, to limit physical interaction wherever possible, but lawyers must be able to meet with their clients and accompany them to court, when required (while following recommended social distancing precautions).

We would welcome the opportunity to work with you as you consider additional steps to keep Ohioans safe while balancing the availability of essential services, the need for Ohioans to work and provide for their families and to keep Ohio's economy moving. The lawyers of Ohio stand ready to be active and *essential* partners in that endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Augsburger".

Mary Augsburger, Esq.
Chief Executive Officer
Ohio State Bar Association

cc: Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court Maureen O'Connor