

# Legal Update

January 2021



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The team at Amy Goodson Co., LLC appreciates the opportunity to have worked with you this past year.

We wish you a Happy New Year and look forward to our continued work together in 2021.

Our best,  
Rebecca  
Becky  
Amy  
Carlana

## School Quarantine Guidance Updated

At the end of December, Governor DeWine announced that Ohio is changing its guidance regarding quarantines following in-classroom exposure in K-12 schools. Moving forward, students and teachers exposed to a COVID-positive person in school are no longer required to quarantine as long as the exposure occurred in a classroom setting and all students/teachers were wearing masks and following other appropriate protocols.

The change follows an evaluation of virus spread in Ohio schools conducted by researchers with the Ohio Schools COVID-19 Evaluation Team. Preliminary results of the evaluation found no discernable difference in the risk of contracting the Coronavirus between those in close contact (defined as within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes) with a positive

person in the classroom and those who were farther away.

"This evaluation confirms for us that Ohio's classrooms are a safe place for our students and that the commitment our schools have made to keeping kids safe in the classroom is working," said Governor DeWine.

The Governor's office advises that schools should continue to require quarantines for exposed students in situations where masking and distancing protocols were not followed.

The updated quarantine guidance does not apply to after-school activities, including sports.



## House Bill 404

Signed into law with immediate effectivity in late November, Ohio House Bill 404 addresses a variety of COVID-19 temporary laws including:

- Extending the ability for school boards to meet by remote technology through July 1, 2021.
- Extending Seamless Summer Options meal program through July 1, 2021 allowing schools to provide more than one day's worth of meals to children via a single meal pick-up or delivery.

- Prohibiting the state from penalizing schools for failing to administer kindergarten readiness, diagnostic, or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading assessments. (Schools may elect to administer tests if desired.)

- Prohibiting the state from penalizing schools for failing to administer kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup> grade health screenings by November 1, 2020 to students who are quarantining or who are unable to attend school due to the student or family being medically compromised, or those residing in an area with a stay-at-home order.

- Allowing community schools to continue accepting responsibility to provide or arrange for student transportation for the 2020-2021 school year even without having provided the statutorily required notification to the district by January 1, 2020. Further allows community schools which do take on transportation to receive state transportation funding for the entire school year.

- Extending the validity of teaching licenses which expire on or before April 1, 2021 to July 1, 2021.

### Q: Did Ohio change its school funding system?

A: During 2020 legislation had been introduced in the Ohio House (H.B. 305) and a corresponding bill in the Senate (S.B. 376) to revamp the state's funding of K-12 public schools.

Of significant note was the plan to fund charter schools directly from the state, rather than via home districts as is done currently. While this direct funding could help eliminate hostility and flagging issues with districts, the

manner in which the funding was included possibly allowed it to be struck from the budget, leaving charters entirely without funds.

Additionally, legislators questioned generally whether the proposed plan adequately provided resources to the poorest districts, supported the needs of disabled students, English language learners, and other special populations.

With so many questions looming, a new plan did not become law last year. Rather, the issue is slated to be addressed during 2021's state budgeting process.

## National School Choice Week

National School Choice Week takes place every January with the purpose of raising public awareness about the numerous education options available to families. National School Choice Week celebrates all types of K-12 education including traditional schools, charter schools, online schools, and homeschooling. The focus is the benefit of having choice to fit differing family and student needs.

This year, National School Choice Week will be January 24<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>.

According to the Columbus Dispatch, charter school enrollment in Ohio is up nearly 6,800 students in the 2020-2021 school year. This 6% increase brings the total charter enrollment to approximately 113,000 students. More than 80% of the increase is attributed to new students enrolled in e-schools.

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