



April 12, 2021

## Statehouse News

*From the Office of State Representative Bride Rose Sweeney*



### A Note from Rep. Sweeney

Dear Neighbor,

As Spring dawns on Ohio and the pandemic draws ever nearer to an end, I hope this update finds you well. The early months of the 134th General Assembly have been incredibly busy. Every two years, the legislature must pass a state operating budget. The House of Representatives is in the middle of crafting that \$75 billion budget right now. As a member of the Finance Committee as well as its Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee, I am fortunate to have a real opportunity to work on this important document.

However, it is my belief that nothing before the General Assembly is more important than enacting a constitutional and fair system for funding schools in the State of Ohio. More than twenty years ago, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the state's system for funding schools is unconstitutional and challenged the General Assembly to act. Yet for decades now, our state has suffered under an increasingly broken school funding system that is neither equitable nor adequate and is all too often unpredictable, erratic, irrational, and unfair. Legislators have argued without substantial action and debated the multiple rulings that our school funding system is unconstitutional and inadequate. This isn't merely a theoretical issue; for each and every delay, countless students have been left behind through no fault of their own. The time to act is now.

[House Bill 1](#), the Fair School Funding Plan, would fully and finally address Ohio's broken school funding system. As the lead Democratic sponsor of this bipartisan legislation, I am honored and humbled to fight for this historic, once in a lifetime opportunity to build a better future for Ohio's children, and their children's children. House Bill 1 mirrors House Bill 305, the Cupp-Patterson Plan, which passed the House in December with overwhelming and bipartisan support, 87-9. Over the course of several years, the Fair School Funding Plan was carefully crafted by educators, experts, and legislators from all corners of the state in order. As a result, it would address - in each unique district - the actual cost of educating children in today's world and allocate those costs fairly between the state and local taxpayers.

Unfortunately the current system essentially pulls numbers out of a hat and in recent years less than 20% of districts were on the formula and in the last General Assembly none of them were. House Bill 1 offers a stable, transparent, scalable and predictable funding model that will enable districts to plan ahead and to offer, sustain, and grow quality educational opportunities for Ohio's children. **Additionally, state finances can accommodate the plan without raising taxes.** Ohio's average increase in K-12 spending over the last ten years into the current system is very in line with what a phase in would cost. While H.B. 1 would not relieve local districts of future levy efforts, it would paint a clearer picture of a district's capacity and in many cases reduce the frequency of levies.

Getting House Bill 1 across the finish line will take all of us. If you have any questions about this effort to ensure a fair, equitable, and **most importantly constitutional system for funding Ohio's schools**, please feel free to reach out to my office anytime at (614) 466-3350 or [Rep14@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:Rep14@ohiohouse.gov). We would be more than happy to help!

All the best,

*Bride Rose Sweeney*

### Legislative Spotlight: House Bill 163 Prohibit Mandatory Nurse Overtime

I recently introduced House Bill (H.B.) [163](#), bipartisan legislation that prohibits mandatory overtime work for nurses as a condition of employment. The bill passed the previous General Assembly by a vote of 80-13.

Nurses already put in long hours under increasingly difficult conditions. Especially in a hospital setting, being forced to work unscheduled overtime is wrong and can be harmful to both staff and patients alike. H.B. 163 would allow a nurse to say, without fear of losing their job, that they cannot safely work additional hours over and above the hours they just completed. This respects the dignity of their work and protects patients, particularly when medical error is one of the leading causes of preventable death in the United States. Under the legislation, nurses can still voluntarily work overtime and hospitals can still offer overtime and flex staff.

Deborah Arms, president of the Ohio Nurses Association, had this to say of the legislation: "If a nurse is too fatigued to provide the safe care his/her patient deserves, the nurse should have the right to refuse overtime without fear of discipline. Prioritizing safe nurse staffing benefits everyone: nurses, patients and healthcare facilities. Research points to dissatisfied patients, increased errors and higher patient readmissions when nurses are not safely staffed. Furthermore, nurse burnout increases with regular extended shifts, leading to costly nurse-turnover for healthcare facilities."

H.B. 163 now awaits a third hearing before the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

### Resources

#### COVID-19 Vaccines

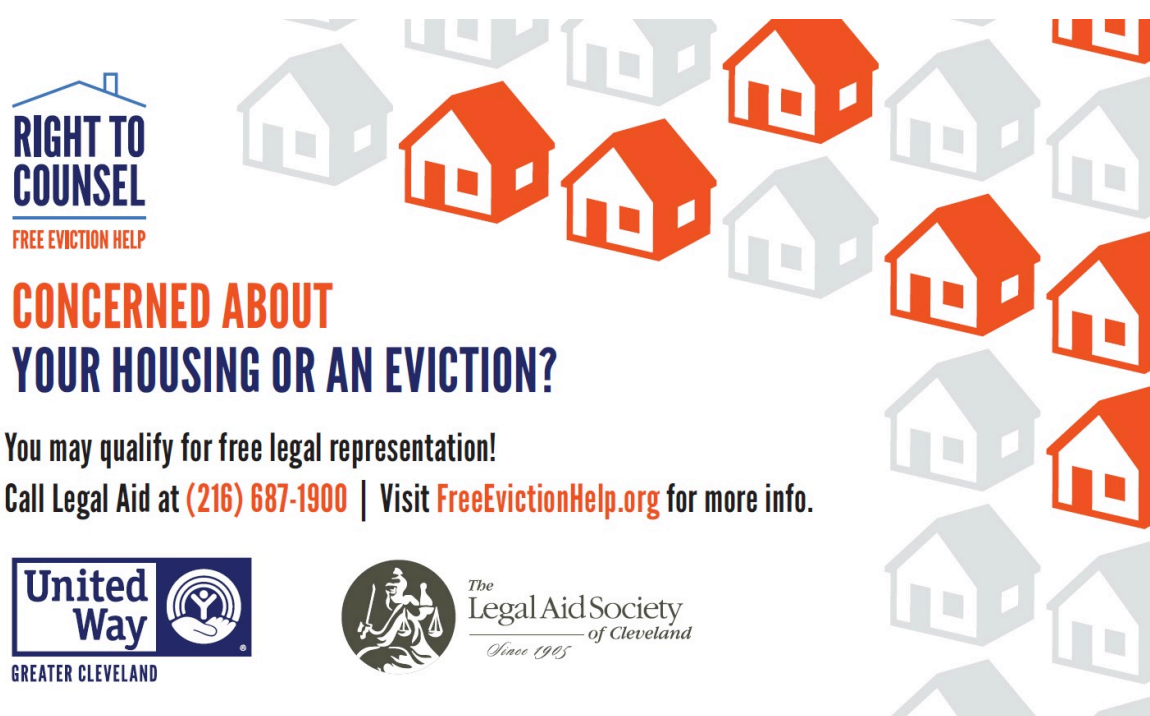
- All Ohioans aged 16 and older are now eligible to make an appointment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.
- All the available COVID-19 vaccines have been proven safe and effective at preventing serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. Getting vaccinated with the first vaccine available to you can help protect you and others.
- Visit [gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov) to locate a provider and book an appointment near you.
- In addition, a list of providers statewide is available online at [vaccine.coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://vaccine.coronavirus.ohio.gov).

#### Tech Assistance for K-12 Students

- The pandemic has worsened existing issues across society, but especially in the realm of K-12 education.
- The nonprofit PCs for People is distributing 10,000 computers and 5,000 hot spots to families in Cuyahoga County with K-12 students in public and charter schools that do not currently have a computer or in-home internet access.
- Families can sign up online at [pcsforpeople.org/ohio](https://pcsforpeople.org/ohio) (preferred) or by calling (216) 930-5741.
- Email [cuyahoga@pcsforpeople.com](mailto:cuyahoga@pcsforpeople.com) for more information

#### Eviction Assistance

- The pandemic has made it harder for many people to make rent or mortgage payments.
- The Cleveland Legal Aid Society may be of assistance at [www.lasclev.org](https://www.lasclev.org) or (216) 687-1900.



- You may also seek a local rent assistance grant at (833) 377-RENT (7368) or [neorenthelp.org](https://neorenthelp.org).



#### Ohio House District 14 Resource Guide (Available [HERE](#))

- My office has compiled an extensive resource guide to help my constituents with:
  - COVID-19 Guidance and Helplines
  - Economic Support
  - Food Assistance
  - Small Business Assistance
  - Educational Materials
  - Employment Resources
  - Multilingual Resources
  - Ways to Donate
  - Mental Health Resources
  - Utilities
- Please share this guide and contact my office if you have any suggestions for additions.

#### Cuyahoga County

- Local governments are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Cuyahoga has responded to the crisis by launching its [Small Business Resource Center](#), converting its [website](#) to an information hub, and holding regular briefings at the County [Board of Public Health](#)

#### Unemployment Compensation

- **If you were previously denied normal compensation, you may be eligible for PUA.** Apply online at [pua.unemployment.ohio.gov](https://pua.unemployment.ohio.gov).
- If you are able to return to work, you should still be eligible to be compensated for the weeks you were laid off.
- To apply for normal unemployment, visit [unemployment.ohio.gov](https://unemployment.ohio.gov) or call 1-877-644-6562.
  - **Use mass layoff code 2000180** to expedite your claim.
  - If you have already filed and did not use the code, do not reapply.
- Those waiting for unemployment benefits may also qualify for additional benefits, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). To learn more, visit [benefits.ohio.gov](https://benefits.ohio.gov).

#### COVID-19 Information and Prevention

- Have questions about COVID-19?
  - Call: 833-427-5634
  - Visit: [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov)

I have been working hard to be a reliable source of timely and accurate information. If you are interested in **regular summaries of the Governor's press conferences**, please contact my office or use this [link](#).

Please stay healthy, and don't hesitate to reach out to my office if you ever have any questions or concerns. I can always be reached at [Rep14@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:Rep14@ohiohouse.gov) and **(614) 466-3350**.

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