



October 5, 2020

Statehouse News

From the Office of State Representative Bride Rose Sweeney



A Note from Rep. Sweeney

Dear Neighbor,

Even with the election on the horizon, I remain hard at work for our community as Ohio faces a tight budget due to the pandemic. As the fall brings cooler months, economic and public health challenges will continue. While our national politics are very polarized, I am committed to working with anyone and everyone regardless of party to get things done for our community.

The renewed effort to fix Ohio's broken school funding formula is a great example of coming together to reach bipartisan solutions. Recently I was selected to serve on the Finance Subcommittee working on [House Bill 305](#) to fund Ohio schools and fix a decades-old unconstitutional system. Students, teachers, and support staff deserve a formula which accounts for the many demands of learning today. It's important to know that anything that isn't signed into law before January will need to be reintroduced in the next General Assembly. I look forward to forging a better future for generations to come as this Subcommittee sprints to the finish line.

More broadly, my role on the House Finance Committee allows me to ensure the state is fiscally responsible while protecting vital public services and supporting the local governments that provide them. Keeping our seventy-billion-dollar operating budget in balance is another important exercise in cooperation and bipartisanship. Even with some federal assistance, this is still a tough financial situation for Ohio. I believe that if there ever were a time to use the rainy day fund, it's now. I plan to share my perspective with the Governor and my colleagues when budget talks begin.

Don't forget: TODAY, October 5th is the deadline to register to vote in Ohio. You can register to vote online with the Ohio Secretary of State [here](#), if you have an Ohio driver's license or ID. If you don't, you can still register to vote by mailing in a registration [form](#) and having it postmarked today. I also would encourage everyone to check their registration [here](#), because millions of Ohioans have been kicked off the voter rolls over the last decade. These voter purges are riddled with errors and often target based on skipping a few elections (i.e. not voting in six years). Ask your friends and family to make sure they're registered; regardless of politics it's so important that our community is heard this upcoming election.

To cut down on congestion and avoid the possible spread of COVID-19 at polling places, you may also vote by mail. You should have gotten an application for an absentee ballot in the mail if you were already registered to vote. You can also print one [here](#). Make sure you mail in your request and return your ballot as soon as possible! Track your ballot [here](#) to follow its progress from when it's requested to when it's received. You may drop off your ballot at a secure drop box outside the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections or with bipartisan pairs of election officials at 3100 Chester Avenue in Cleveland.

Ohio needs to be better at ensuring the right to vote during the pandemic. As of right now, there is only one location for one million voters in Cuyahoga County to drop off their ballots. During the March election, that caused traffic jams and long lines at the box. There are still pending lawsuits over expanding secure ballot drop boxes and allowing bipartisan BOE teams to receive ballots at libraries. I will continue to keep you updated when there's more information. In addition, you'll need to pay for postage to vote absentee this year, even though far more people are expected to rely on voting by mail and the Federal Government allocated CARES Act money for this purpose. I introduced legislation and offered an amendment to cover election postage, but they were denied. I will continue to fight to expand access, but all of this makes it even more important to have a plan for how to vote.

In closing, please feel free to contact me if I can be of any assistance. My number one focus is helping my constituents. Many people are still struggling to get their unemployment checks, or struggling through bureaucratic red tape to keep their businesses open. If there is anything I can do for you, please never hesitate to reach out. You can reach me at (614) 466-3350 or via email at Rep14@ohiohouse.gov.

All the best,

Bride Rose Sweeney



Updates

A Roundtable with the Auditor of State

- I recently attended an unemployment roundtable alongside Ohio's Auditor of State. While we come from different sides of the aisle, Auditor Faber and I agreed that the time for reform is now.
- To prepare for this discussion, I reviewed the number of constituents who reached out for help navigating the unemployment system.
- My office has been able to assist **over 200 constituents** with unemployment since March.
- I realize this is a stressful financial time for many people, so please don't hesitate to contact me anytime I can help you or your family.

A Letter to the Secretary

- My colleagues and I sent a letter to Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose, asking him to do his job by using his authority to help voters in these unprecedented times.
- We provided him with a [16-point checklist of steps](#) that he could take immediately to protect your right to vote, including:
 - Allowing multiple secure ballot drop boxes
 - Prepaying return postage for election mail
 - Keeping polling locations open
 - Accepting online absentee ballot applications

The Census

- The U.S. Census will end all counting efforts at the end of the month.
- If you haven't already, please visit 2020census.gov and be counted.
- Participating in this year's census is incredibly important for creating fair congressional districts as well as determining how much funding our community receives for important issues such as education, healthcare, and road construction.

Legislative Spotlight: House Bill 752

- House Bill 752 is my **bipartisan** legislation to prohibit anyone from interfering with the circulation of election petitions by threatening, intimidating or compensating another person, a practice commonly referred to as petition blocking.
- Petition blocking enables bad actors to trample on the democratic process and silence the voices of Ohioans. Passing HB 752 would end this nefarious tactic and **give power back to the people of Ohio**.
- [Petition blockers were used in 2019](#) to prevent signature gathering for a popular referendum on House Bill 6, now at the center of an FBI investigation into an alleged \$60 million public corruption scheme led by former Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford).

- The First Amendment right to petition – and for the voters to have a say – is sacred and foundational to our democracy, which is why I'm encouraged to see some bipartisan support for this bill.

- House Bill 752 was introduced August 26th and referred to the House State and Local Government Committee.
 - I have been calling for House Bill 752 to have fair hearings.
 - If you feel strongly about the bill, you can echo my calls by contacting [Chairman Wiggam](#) at (614) 466-1474 regarding HB 752 to prohibit petition blocking.

Resources

Tech Assistance for K-12 Students

- PCs for People, a nonprofit, is [distributing](#) 10,000 computers and 5,000 hot spots with 2 year subscriptions 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 (preferred) or by calling (216) 930-5741.
- Families can choose to contribute to the cost of the technology, which will fund additional digital inclusion efforts across the county or receive financial aid to cover the full cost.
- Email cuyahoga@pcsforpeople.com for more information

Eviction Assistance

- I understand that the beginning of the month can be a very difficult time for many as rent comes due.
- The Cleveland Legal Aid Society may be of assistance at www.lasclev.org or (216) 687-1900.



- You may also seek a local rent assistance grant at (833) 377-RENT (7368) or 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 Information and Guidance
 - COVID-19 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 with any suggestions that should be included.

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.
- Benefits will be backdated to reflect when you were first eligible for unemployment.
- 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 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/.

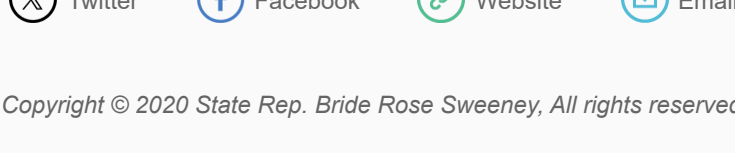
COVID-19 Information and Prevention

- Have questions about COVID-19?
 - Call: 833-427-5634
 - Visit: 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 take precautions to keep yourself healthy, and do not hesitate to reach out to my office if you have any questions or concerns. I can always be reached at Rep14@ohiohouse.gov and **(614) 466-3350**.

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