



OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Scott W. DiMauro, President
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The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

August 17, 2020

The Honorable Robert Cupp
Speaker, Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Speaker Cupp:

On behalf of the 122,000 members of the Ohio Education Association, I write to express our opposition to House Bill 606 as passed by the Senate. The bill differs significantly from the version passed by the House in May. Notably, a provision that would create a presumption, for the purposes of Workers Compensation, that certain workers who contract COVID-19 did so in the course of doing their jobs was removed from the bill. Further, if employees get sick due to unsafe conditions and the spread of the disease, HB 606 would set a very high bar for plaintiffs and prohibits class actions by groups of employees or unions.

As school districts consider what it will take to begin the new school year, educators and support personnel are understandably concerned about the health and safety of themselves, their families, and their students. In the face of a pandemic, we urge districts to heed the advice of public health experts and open in a responsible manner based upon the risks and needs of their community. Under these circumstances it would be the wrong call for the legislature to pass broad liability exemptions for employers. Wanton disregard for health and safety guidelines such social distancing, personal protective equipment and sanitization cannot be condoned or encouraged.

For the reasons outlined above, we urge the House not to concur with the Senate amendments to HB 606. If the legislature is to pass civil immunity for employers, it should be narrowly tailored to encourage that the best health and safety precautions are taken. Educators in Ohio's schools and campuses deserve no less. In fact, all Ohio employees, students, and citizens should be able to trust that efforts are being made to keep them safe rather than protections are being sought to shield bad actors from legal culpability.

Sincerely,

Scott DiMauro
President

CC: Members of the Ohio House of Representatives

