



January 6, 2020

Statehouse News

From the Office of State Representative Bride Rose Sweeney



A Note from Rep. Sweeney

Dear Neighbor,

Looking back at the 133rd General Assembly, I could not be more grateful to serve our community in the Ohio House of Representatives. The final days of any legislative term are often incredibly busy and chaotic, as any remaining bills die if they are not passed by the end of the two-year term. This "lame duck" session was similar but failed to address many critical issues. I am frustrated by a lack of action from the Majority Party which caused legislation to expire on many of the issues that matter most. In particular, it is extremely disappointing that the General Assembly declined to finally address Ohio's decades-long unconstitutional school funding formula by kicking the can down the road on a bipartisan and evidence-based formula. The Majority also refused to swiftly repeal House Bill 6, which is at the center of an alleged \$60 million bribery scandal. The appearance of corruption alone should require this bill to undergo the legislative process again in order to restore public trust. Nonetheless, the work ahead is clear and requires bipartisan cooperation.

Despite some inaction, there are a few accomplishments to highlight from the last two years. We directed millions in federal dollars to local governments and small businesses to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. My office and I led the effort to extend flexibility for these funds and ensure they could be used to prevent further cuts to vital services, which Congress eventually did. I also voted to support first responders as the Legislature approved workers compensation for police and firefighters with PTSD. We reformed training within the foster care system, funded efforts to preserve the environment, and more. You can see everything that passed (or didn't) [here](#). As a member of the Minority Party, I sponsored two bills which became law and helped secure millions in new capital funding for our area. You can read more about those efforts in the sections below. I am humbled to have the opportunity to continue working for you in the 134th Ohio General Assembly.

While shaping policy is an important part of the job, much of my work as a state legislator is being a problem solver for those in our community when they are dealing with state-related issues. Far too many Ohioans have struggled and are still struggling to navigate the unemployment system. Throughout the pandemic, my office has continued to assist my constituents with state agencies and programs. I encourage you to reach out anytime that we might be helpful to you, your family, or your neighbors. Likewise, many small businesses - as well as other organizations that make up the backbone of our community - have struggled immensely because of COVID. My office has been hard at work to connect them with the information and resources they need at the state and local level to get through this. I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure that working people and families can not only survive but thrive.

I look forward to hearing from you during all the work ahead. Have a safe and happy New Year!

All the best,

Bride Rose Sweeney

\$24 Million in New State Capital Funds for our Community

Ohio's capital budget, which helps fund brick and mortar improvements for everything from state agencies to local community projects, was far from guaranteed to happen in the midst of the pandemic. However, the \$2.5 billion construction bill has finally become law. I advocated for this from the beginning, because it couldn't be more important to build up our communities precisely at this moment. My efforts were successful in securing \$300,000 for community projects in my district, including:

- **\$100,000 for the City of Brooklyn** to develop 24 acres into a park and connect it by trail to other communities, park systems, and trails
- **\$100,000 for the City of Brook Park** to construct an outdoor amphitheater on its municipal campus
- **\$50,000 for the City of Parma Heights** to continue the restoration of the historic Cassidy Theatre
- **\$50,000 for the City of Middleburg Heights** to ensure ADA-compliant pavilions in a public park

I also personally advocated for \$14.2 million in funds that were secured for a number of projects of countywide significance, such as the County's Mental Health Diversion Center, the Rock Hall, and the Cleveland Art Museum. Many of these projects will create jobs and work to address long-standing issues that the pandemic has made worse. Now isn't a time to stop investing in working people, it's time to double down. Ohio used a fiscally-responsible means to do just that via very low interest bonds.

Bipartisan House Bill 404 & House Bill 9 Become Law

Bipartisan House Bill 404 Signed Into Law, Continuing Virtual Public Meetings, Extending Licenses for Ohioans

House Bill 404, one of my two bipartisan bills to be signed into law, emphasizes the need for state government to be flexible during an unprecedented time. Among other things, the legislation:

- Lessens the burden on teachers, who have been one of many unsung heroes during the pandemic, by holding them harmless on state testing and teacher evaluations in the Fall;
- Ensures that vital CARES Act funds, meant for Ohio's local governments, do not go to waste;
- Extends the authorization for virtual public meetings until July 1, 2021;
- Further extends licenses that expired during the pandemic;
- Makes changes to allow continued participation in the College Credit Plus Program during the pandemic;
- Allows state retirees to return to service without penalty in critical areas like the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

You can read more [here](#).

Bipartisan Higher Education Bill Signed Into Law, Shifting State Policy to Encourage Degree Completion

The other bill that I sponsored which became law was House Bill 9. It is a critical first step toward ensuring that every Ohio student graduates on time and with a degree to show for it. Among other things, the legislation:

- Develops an electronic equivalency management tool to assist in the transfer of college credits and minimize unnecessary duplication or institutional barriers;
- Establishes new standards for transfer credits not accepted between state institutions of higher education;
- Requires state universities to review student records and notify students if they are eligible or close to being eligible for an associate's degree after leaving school;
- Creates a waiver for tuition and fees if a full time student was unable to enroll in a final course because of circumstances beyond the student's control and meets certain other criteria.

This legislation puts us back on the path to increasing opportunity and reversing the drain of talent and young people from our state. House Bill 9 also works toward Ohio's "complete to compete" goal of 65% degree or certification attainment for working Ohioans. You can read more [here](#).

Resources

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 pcsforspeople.org/ohio (preferred) or by calling (216) 930-5741.
- Email cuyahoga@pcsforspeople.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 or (216) 687-1900.

RIGHT TO COUNSEL
FREE CRIMINAL HELP

CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR HOUSING OR AN EVICTION?

You may qualify for free legal representation!
Call Legal Aid at (216) 687-1900 | Visit FreeEvictionHelp.org for more info.

United Way Greater Cleveland | The Legal Aid Society Since 1909 of Cleveland

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

NORTHEAST OHIO RENT HELP

IF YOU'RE HAVING TROUBLE MAKING YOUR RENT PAYMENTS DUE TO COVID-19, WE MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU.

833-377-RENT (7368)
NEORENTHHELP.ORG

CHN Housing Partners | EDEN

FUNDED BY:

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 unemployment.ohio.gov** **eligible for PUA**. Apply online at 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 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.

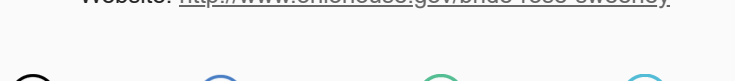
COVID-19 Information and Prevention

- 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 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 and (614) 466-3350.

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