



May 28, 2020

Statehouse News

From the Office of State Representative *Bride Rose Sweeney*



A Note from Rep. Sweeney

Dear Neighbor,

I hope this message finds you healthy and well. A lot has changed in the month since my last newsletter. The Ohio Legislature has reconvened, and I am eager to continue my work for the State of Ohio and the 14th House District.

The Ohio House of Representatives has passed a number of bills that I co-sponsored, such as House Bill 388 to prevent surprise medical billing, House Bill 609 to create a temporary tax amnesty program, and House Bill 3 - known as Aisha's Law - to protect victims of domestic violence. All of these issues are components of Ohio's crisis response. While the Legislature has done some important work, it has not done nearly enough to assist in this crisis. In order to reopen Ohio responsibly, it is critical that we have increased testing and contact tracing. As your voice in Columbus, your health and wellbeing will always be my top priority. As our economy restarts, I will continue to push for measures that protect workers, support small businesses, and offer relief for struggling families. I am committed to striking a balance that accounts for both public health and economic recovery.

Recently I was successful in passing my own legislation through the Ohio House. My bipartisan House Bill 404 provides flexibility to state institutions of higher education to meet remotely without sacrificing transparency and accountability - this is especially important in light of COVID-19. Also in the realm of higher education, I testified on my House Bill 595 to end transcript withholding for student debt that prevents students from entering into the workforce possibly over library fines and parking tickets. Additionally, I testified on my House Bill 521 to break down information barriers to federal loan forgiveness programs for teachers, nurses, caseworkers, and other public servants. Making sure people can access their degrees and much-needed student loan relief will be key to our economic recovery. These are just a few of the many bills I am currently working on. For more information on all my legislative work, please click [here](#). I take pride in working across the aisle to find commonsense solutions that help Ohioans navigate our present circumstances.

As many of you know, the State's unemployment compensation system was woefully unprepared for the 1.2 million Ohioans who are out of work due to the crisis. My office and I have been able to help many of my constituents resolve issues with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, but only because they knew to contact my office for assistance. **If you or someone you know still can't get through to unemployment, please let my office know by clicking [here](#).** It's been reported that only about half of the State's 1.2 million unemployment claims have been paid out so far. Many of those claims are denials that need to be refiled for federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, which specifically helps those who may not have been able to receive normal unemployment compensation (e.g. self-employed workers or 1099 filers). My office is always more than willing to help with state agencies and issues.

Finally, don't forget to complete the 2020 Census if you have not already (click [here](#)). The process is quick, easy, and couldn't be more important. By filling out the Census, you will help determine Ohio's seats in Congress, draw fair electoral maps, and guide \$675 billion in federal dollars to build roads, schools, and hospitals in our state. It is more important than ever that Cuyahoga counts.

My office remains open and available to assist you with any questions or concerns you have as we navigate these unprecedented times together. Don't hesitate to reach out anytime that I might be of service.

All the best,

Bride Rose Sweeney

Updates on COVID-19

State Budget Cuts

Due to decreased revenues during the COVID-19 crisis, the Governor announced \$775M in unilateral state budget cuts.

- Cuts include:
 - \$300 million reduction in K-12 public school funding
 - \$210 million from Medicaid spending
 - \$110 million from college and university funding
 - \$100 million across state agencies
- The Governor's cuts were to fill a budget shortfall for this fiscal year, which ends June 30th. The shortfall occurred because state revenues from sales and income tax plummeted while state expenditures - such as Medicaid enrollments - were higher than projected to meet the needs of Ohioans.
- I expect the Legislature to have to make future changes to the current budget to finish out the biennium since the State, under obligation of the Ohio Constitution, cannot run a deficit.
- I am urging both the Governor and the Legislature to use the State's \$2.6 billion rainy day fund to shore up parts of our budget. These funds were specifically set aside for extraordinary circumstances such as the one we are in.
- In Ohio, we are going to have to make some very tough choices when it comes to our budget. I believe that Ohio should be closing corporate tax loopholes and helping our local governments make ends meet, not going after services that help working families during this crisis.

Capital Budget

- Every two years, the Legislature passes a capital appropriations budget that invests in buildings and community projects across the State of Ohio.
- Back in January, my office submitted more than 50 requests for funding that prioritized our local community.
- The State has no constitutional obligation to pass a capital budget. Due to the current crisis, this funding is up in the air, and there has been push back about going forward.
- I personally believe that some scaled-back version of the capital budget should go forward to invest in our economy.
- A capital budget would take some pressure off the General Revenue Fund because these projects are bonded.
- Members of the House Finance Committee, including myself, are looking at a capital reappropriations bill to fund certain projects. I will push to make sure that any project in our community that can be a part of this legislation will get funded.

5 Protocols for Most Businesses to Reopen

- Require face coverings for employees and recommend them for clients/customers at all times.
- Conduct daily health assessments.
- Maintain good hygiene at all times.
- Clean and sanitize workplaces throughout the workday.
- Limit capacity to meet social distancing guidelines.

You can report unsafe workplaces and other violations to the [Cuyahoga Board of Health](#).

COVID-19 in Nursing Homes

- Nursing homes have proven to be hot spots for the coronavirus, threatening the lives of some of our most vulnerable citizens.
- Governor DeWine has announced new Congregate Care Unified Response Teams to expand testing and tracing at nursing homes by bringing partners together, including the Ohio National Guard.
- The Governor says that the initial goal of these new nursing home teams will be to test all staff.
- Additional testing, manpower, and contact tracing will help combat the disease and protect those in nursing homes and the staff who work to care for them. We must take these measures in order to have both good public health and a robust economic recovery.

COVID-19 Resources

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.

COVID-19 Care Line

- The Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services has launched a support line to help Ohioans who are struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- For help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, call **1-800-720-9616**.

Unemployment Compensation

- 1099 and self-employed workers are now eligible for unemployment benefits** under the federal CARES Act. Apply online at [pua.unemployment.ohio.gov](#). If you were previously denied normal compensation, you may be eligible for PUA.
- Due to a record number of unemployment claims, processing has taken much longer than normal.
- Benefits will be backdated to reflect when the individual was 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 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](#).

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](#)

COVID-19 Information and Prevention

- Have questions about COVID-19?
 - Call: 833-427-5634
 - Visit: [coronavirus.ohio.gov](#).
- Preventative Measures
 - Wash your hands for 20 seconds or more with soapy water several times a day, or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Avoid contact with people who are sick.
 - Stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects, and surfaces each day.
- Wear a Mask
 - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are strongly encouraging people to wear cloth face masks when in public.
 - Cloth face masks prevent the slow spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.
 - Learn how to make a cloth face mask [here](#)

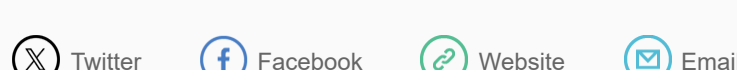
I have been working hard to be a reliable source of timely and accurate information. If you are interested in **regular summaries of the Governor's press conferences**, please contact my office or use this [link](#).

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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