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HB 197 (COVID-19 Relief Bill): What Schools Need to Know

Today, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine will sign HB 197, a COVID-19 relief bill. The bill provides flexibility for meeting the daily challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

House Bill 197 has important provisions that impact Ohio's schools, specifically:

- It cancels mandatory school and removes consideration of a lack of testing and testing data from a number of important school decisions, including counting enrollment, which students are subject to withdrawal, scholarship eligibility, the third-grade reading guarantee, and teacher value-added evaluations.
- It allows schools to use, create, or revise a plan to provide web-based learning to students under R.C. 3313.482 to make up any number of hours schools missed under the State's school closure order.
- It authorizes speech and language therapists, occupational health therapists, physical therapists, psychologists, counselors, social workers, therapists, and intervention specialists to provide services by electronic delivery or telehealth communication to any student receiving those services, regardless of the method of delivery prior to the school closure order, through the duration of the closure or until December 1, 2020 if the closure has not been rescinded by that date.
- It prohibits the Ohio Department of education from publishing state report cards for 2019-2020 and states that the lack of report card shall have no effect on determining sanctions or penalties for school districts.
- It allows students who were on track to graduate in 2019-2020 but who have not completed the requirements due to the school closure to graduate where the school's principal

and teachers determine that the student has successfully completed the curriculum.

- It authorizes the Department of Education to issue one-year nonrenewable provisional licenses.
- It temporarily exempts schools from state food-processing requirements to allow them to continue serving meals to students.
- It allows Districts to not complete required evaluations of employees if the evaluations were not completed prior to the school closure where the District determines that conducting the evaluation would be impossible or impractical.
- It freezes eligibility for EdChoice Vouchers to those schools that are currently eligible until February 1, 2021.

This bill provides some much-needed clarification and flexibility to Ohio schools as they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and Ohio's school closures.

For more information about how the state's response to COVID-19 may impact you or your school, please contact [Joe Scholler](#), [Alex Ewing](#), or any attorney in Frost Brown Todd's [Government Services Practice Group](#).

To provide guidance and support to clients as this global public-health crisis unfolds, Frost Brown Todd has created a [Coronavirus Response Team](#). Our attorneys are on hand to answer your questions and provide guidance on how to proactively prepare for and manage any coronavirus-related threats to your business operations and workforce.

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