



PAGE Legislative Updates August 2021

Note: The content and links in this PAGE Legislative Update are for informational purposes only.

Update - PA Education Funding Lawsuit

A lawsuit alleging the PA General Assembly has violated the state's constitution by failing to provide fair and adequate funding for public education's trial date has been rescheduled for October 12, 2021. The trial is expected to last several weeks as school districts will make their case that the state's funding formula is skewed and has harmed the state's poorest children. [Read more here](#) about the new trial date and the lawsuit. The trial will take place at the Pennsylvania Judicial Center, near the Capitol, and is expected to continue daily through much of the fall.

While one may not be able to spend all their days in the courtroom this fall, there will be a livestream link forthcoming. The public may [sign up for updates](#) about the case on the Fund Our Schools PA website, a joint project with their co-counsel, the Public Interest Law Center.

Source: [News — FundOurSchoolsPA.org](#)

Update - Senate Bill 506

Pointing to a rise in anxiety disorders and depression in school children, Pennsylvania lawmakers have proposed legislation that would allow K-12 students two mental health days per semester. The change is needed now more than ever, some officials argue, in the wake of the pandemic and all its attendant disruptions. State Senator Judith L. Schwank (D-Berks County) wrote in a co-sponsorship memorandum that, "This urgently requires further examination and immediate intervention." The bill is currently in the Education Committee, where it was referred to on April 9, 2021. No new movement to date.

Source: [Lawmakers Propose Mental Health Days For Students In PA \(msn.com\)](#)

Update - Senate Bill 1

In June 2021, the Pennsylvania School Boards Association announced that more than 400 school districts have passed a charter school reform resolution calling for changes to the 24-year-old charter school law.

With more than 80% of Pennsylvania's 500 public school districts collectively calling for change through the adoption of a formal resolution. Locally elected school leaders across



Pennsylvania are calling upon the General Assembly to enact substantial charter school reform now. No new movement to date.

Source: [btCheck.cfm \(state.pa.us\)](https://btcheck.cfm(state.pa.us))

Article: [Op-Ed: SB1 would add charter schools without fixing how we fund them \(goerie.com\)](https://goerie.com)

Governor Wolf Mandates Mask Wearing in Schools

With a focus on protecting students and keeping them in classrooms, Governor Tom Wolf joined the departments of Health, Human Services and Education on August 31, 2021. They discussed the current state of COVID-19 and a new Secretary of Health order requiring masks to be worn inside K-12 school buildings, early learning programs and childcare providers. The [order](#) takes effect 12:01 a.m. Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

Source: [Wolf Administration Requires Masking in Schools, Early Learning and Child Care Settings to Keep Students Safely in Classrooms and Delta Variant Out \(pa.gov\)](https://pa.gov)

Source: [COVID-19 cases are expected to surge this fall. Here's why school masking may help. \(inquirer.com\)](https://inquirer.com)

Senate Bill 846

Senate Bill 846 came just days before the Department of Health ordered universal masking for staff and students in schools and child care centers amid what the administration calls an alarming rise in COVID-19 cases in children caused by the delta variant.

The administration's reversal on the issue – after months of deferring to local school boards on the policy – came under immediate scrutiny from Republican lawmakers, co-sponsors Sens. Judy Ward, R-Hollidaysburg, and Doug Mastriano, R-Gettysburg.

Source: [Senators introduce mask opt-out for Pennsylvania schoolchildren | Pennsylvania | thecentersquare.com](https://thecentersquare.com)

Education Department Weighs in On Special Education Requirements Amid Ongoing Pandemic

As many students with disabilities return to school in person for the first time in over a year, federal education officials are spelling out what districts nationwide need to do to serve them. In a [letter](#) sent April 24, 2021 to state and local education agencies, the U.S. Department of Education is making clear that despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rights of students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to a Free Appropriate Public Education, or FAPE, have not changed.



Source: [Ed Department Weighs In On Special Ed Requirements Amid Ongoing Pandemic - Disability Scoop](#)

Additional Articles and Resources:

Article: https://www.foxnews.com/us/nationwide-special-education-teacher-shortage?fbclid=IwAR0DIMsv7SmKPGRbDNv6KS_o_111MHzu3B0ai7AU9dSULbTcgYmlru-WSjg

Article: [SLB 306 2021 Long COVID.pdf \(mcusercontent.com\)](#)

Article: <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/student-learning-declined-this-year-especially-for-the-most-vulnerable-kids-data>

Article: [Fighting the Delta Variant: School Reopening Just Got a Lot More Complicated \(edweek.org\)](#)

Article: [New Resource Details Evidence-Based Strategies to Address Impact of Lost Instructional Time by Using American Rescue Plan Funding | U.S. Department of Education](#)

Article: [UPDATED: Wolf reinstates school mask mandate, draws fierce criticism | News | dailyitem.com](#)

Article: [KingSpry | PA School Mask Mandate Medical Exception](#)

Article: [20 States Sue Biden Administration Over School LGBTQ Protections \(edweek.org\)](#)

Resource: [Education Law Center's Back to School Guide - 2021 Back-to-School Guide for Pennsylvania Public School Students | Education Law Center \(elc-pa.org\)](#)

CADRE 8th National Symposium on Special Education - [RISE to the Challenge: Resolve, Innovate, Support, Engage | CADRE \(cadreworks.org\)](#)

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