

Byers, Minton and Associates

This Week at the Statehouse
May 8, 2020

Around the Square

State Budget Cuts

Governor DeWine announced cuts to the state budget to balance the budget for Fiscal Year 2020, which ends on June 30. Medicaid spending will be cut by \$210 million, with K12 Foundation payment reductions of \$300 million, and \$110 in cuts to higher education. The DRC will not face budget cuts, but all other agencies will have their budgets cut by \$100 million. The governor does not yet plan to dip into Ohio's Rainy Day Fund as he feels we will certainly need it in the next fiscal year and perhaps even further out.

Political News and Notes

Reopening Ohio

This week Governor DeWine announced a schedule for the reopening of dine-in service at restaurants along with barbershops and hair salons. On May 15 barbershops and hair salons will be permitted to reopen, while on May 15 outdoor dining at restaurants and bars may resume with indoor dining opening on May 21. All businesses that are reopening will have to adhere to strict safety protocols, such as having employees wear face coverings, allowing 6 feet of distancing between clients, and increased sanitation of surfaces and hand washing. Additionally, many businesses will be allowing customers by appointment only and asking them to wait in their cars until the time of their appointment. Meanwhile, retail services will be permitted to open to the public on May 12. Some retailers have already allowed for curbside pick-up or shopping on an appointment basis. There is no word yet on when fitness centers will be allowed to reopen, but Governor DeWine plans to announce plans for daycare facilities this upcoming Monday, May 11.

Ohio Legislature Reconvenes

This week both the Ohio House and Ohio Senate reconvened for committee and session. Their primary focus for their first week back was COVID-related legislation, amending several pieces of legislation to address their concerns. Controversially, the Ohio House passed Senate Bill 1 with an amendment that limits the Ohio Department of Health Director from extending an order beyond 14-days without approval by the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) with an affirmative vote from at least three of five of the committees members. Additionally, Senate Bill 55, a bill to increase the penalty for selling drugs near a drug rehab facility, was amended to downgrade the penalty for violating a health order to a minor misdemeanor. Both pieces of legislation are now headed back to the Ohio Senate for concurrence, but Governor DeWine has said he will veto both bills if they make it to his desk. Meanwhile, the Ohio Senate passed several senate bills including Senate Bill 310 with appropriates \$350 million from the CARES Act to local jurisdictions

Unemployment Claims

Last week 61,000 Ohioans filed initial unemployment claims, representing a drop in claims compared to the prior six-weeks, but Ohio's 7-week total for initial unemployment claims is 1,118,569. Nationally, the U.S. received 3.2 million initial unemployment claims, bringing national unemployment to over 30 million in the seven week total. Comparatively, 8.7 million people were unemployed during the 2008 recession. The national unemployment rate is 14.7 percent, but it is believed that this could be an underrepresentation.

This Week's Bills

HB 619 - Disease Information: To require the Department of Health to compile and publish certain information on its web site during a state of emergency relating to infectious disease.

HB 620 - Health Impact Statements: To require the Legislative Service Commission to create health impact statements for introduced bills and to create the Health and Equity Interagency Team.

HB 621 - Business Openings: To enact The Business Fairness Act and to declare an emergency.

SB 308 - Civil Immunity: To revise the law governing immunity from civil liability and professional discipline for health care providers during disasters or emergencies, to provide qualified civil immunity to service providers providing services during and after a government-declared disaster, and to declare an emergency.

SB 309 - Swimming Classes: To allow certified swimming classes to take place at a private residential swimming pool without requiring the pool's operator to obtain a public swimming pool license and to declare an emergency.

SB 310 - Federal Funds: To provide for the distribution of some federal coronavirus relief funding to local subdivisions, to make an appropriation, and to declare an emergency.