

# Gov. Pritzker Signs Legislation Cementing COVID-19 Sick Leave Protections for Vaccinated School Staff

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SPRINGFIELD – Joined by stakeholders, advocates and lawmakers, Gov. JB Pritzker signed House Bill 1167, a measure that will keep students and teachers safe in the classroom without penalizing vaccinated school employees for taking COVID-required leave for themselves or their children. Ensuring support for all working families, the legislation protects all hourly school employees in addition to classroom teachers, such as bus drivers, food service providers, and administrative personnel.

“We want to ensure that our school children see the fewest disruptions to their in-person learning due to the public health crisis,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “The bill I signed into law today fulfills that promise by guaranteeing that if a teacher has done their part to keep their classroom safe for their most vulnerable students, they won’t have to worry for a second about their pay or their paid time off should COVID-19 affect their livelihood. At a time when we want to bring people into the education professions, this bill will help Illinois retain and attract teachers and support staff.”

“For the last two years, we have lauded our educators and support staff for their Herculean efforts in keeping our schools running and our students learning, all while keeping them safe and healthy,” said State Rep. Janet Yang Rohr (D-Naperville). “With this Covid wage and benefit protection legislation, we’re putting real action behind our words and making a difference for the teachers and staff that make a difference every day for our students and community.”

“This is a step to recognize those who have done all they can to protect themselves, their families, their students and their schools, but still end up facing hardships because of the pandemic,” said Senate President Don Harmon (D-Oak Park). “They’ve played by the rules, done everything that was recommended, and they shouldn’t lose sick days or pay for doing the right thing. I want to thank the governor for working together with us to find a common-sense approach to address this situation.”

“Our state is in the middle of a growing teacher and education employee shortage,” said Kathi Griffin, President of the Illinois Education Association. We have thousands of open public education positions right now. We need to be doing everything we can to attract young people to the profession and to also show those who’ve chosen education as their life’s work that they are respected. Providing COVID administrative days and paycheck protection for hourly employees is one way we can do that. House Bill 1167 would provide much needed relief to our teachers and support staff who’ve worked diligently to not only provide a quality education for students but also work to keep their students, schools and their communities safe over the past two years.”

“The pandemic has been emotionally and economically daunting for us all, especially educators, school staff, and their families who have been on the front lines of COVID’s effects from day one,” said Illinois Federation of Teachers President Dan Montgomery. “By signing this bill today, Governor Pritzker has provided important relief and ensured that education personnel can afford to take time off if they or their families become ill with COVID-19. His leadership will help keep our students and communities healthy even as new variants arise and COVID rates in our state fluctuate over time.”

HB 1167 requires school districts, public universities, and community colleges to pay educational support personnel and contractors during any school closure and provides paid administrative leave to vaccinated employees for purposes related to COVID-19.

The legislation delivers on a promise to offer the following protections for educators, school employees, and their families in more than 800 school districts statewide:

Paid administrative leave for every employee of a public school district established under Article 10 or Article 34 of the School Code, public university, and public community college who meets the following criteria:

fully vaccinated or has received the required doses to become fully vaccinated within five weeks of the effective date of the Act.

required, or whose child is required, to be excluded from school because of a positive COVID-19 test result or close contact with a person who had a confirmed case of COVID-19.

has been required by the school or school district policy to be excluded from school district property due to COVID-19 symptoms.

Restoration of sick leave for every employee of a public school district, public university, and public community college who meets the following criteria:

fully vaccinated or has received the required doses to become fully vaccinated within five weeks of the effective date of the Act, and

who has previously used their sick time because they or their child were required to be excluded from school because of a positive COVID-19 test result or close contact with a person who had a confirmed case of COVID-19.

has been required by the school or school district policy to be excluded from school district property due to COVID-19 symptoms.

Maintains wage protections for all hourly school employees, including but not limited to, custodians, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, classroom assistants, or administrative staff. This protection applies for the entire 2021-22 school year, including any days that a school has already closed or switched to e-learning which caused the paraprofessional to go without pay or take their own earned paid time off.

This legislation is effective immediately.

