



**LEGISLATION TO EXPAND COVID-19 WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE TO  
FOOD-SERVICE WORKERS, FIRST RESPONDERS, AND PRISON STAFF  
PASSES OHIO HOUSE**

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June 3, 2020**

The Ohio House of Representatives took a major step in providing coverage under the Workers' Compensation Act to employees in certain job sectors who contract COVID-19. On May 28, 2020, the House passed H.B. 606 by a vote of 84 to 9, sending the bill to the Senate for further consideration. House Bill 606, first introduced on April 10, 2020, by State Representative Diane Grendell (R-Chesterland) would protect individuals, businesses, schools, and health care providers, from pandemic-inspired lawsuits. The bill would provide immunity to companies and individuals for the transmission and exposure to COVID-19 unless they engage in intentional misconduct. Health care workers would receive immunity unless their actions constituted reckless disregard for a patient's life or health. Prior to passage, the House agreed to an amendment that would presume that workers in various industries including first responders, grocery stores, food packing/processing, and prison staff, who contract COVID-19 did so on the job, allowing them to receive workers' compensation benefits.

The amendment to H.B. 606 to provide workers' compensation coverage to certain workers who contract COVID-19 was offered by State Representative Brigid Kelly (D-Cincinnati). Representative Kelly had previously sponsored H.B. 605 which would have made COVID-19 a compensable occupational disease for employees of a retail food establishment or food processing establishment.

House Bill 606 moved to the Ohio Senate on June 2, 2020 where it is expected to be referred to the Judiciary Committee.

For ongoing information regarding legislation impacting Ohio's businesses and employers, contact the attorneys at Poling.

