

## Senators File Bill To Reopen Classrooms

By Administrator

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Senate Republicans filed a bill to get students back to school after nearly a year of remote learning. Senate Bill 37, "In-Person Learning Choice for Families," requires schools to provide access to in-person learning under Plan A (minimal social distancing) for students with exceptional needs. It also requires schools to provide in-person learning options for all K-12 students under either Plan A or Plan B (moderate social distancing). Families would still have the choice of remote learning for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year.

Schools will be required to follow all guidance from the Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit, which was developed by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

"Our students need to be in school, there's no question about that. We can get them back into classrooms safely. Students are suffering and parents are watching their children fall behind in their learning, worrying that they'll never catch up," Senate Education Committee Chairwoman Sen. Deanna Ballard (R-Watauga) said. "This legislation balances students' needs, public health guidelines, and parental choice. In order to stymie the ramifications of learning loss, we need to give these families an option for in-class instruction."

Studies have shown that with mitigation efforts schools can reopen safely.

The evidence that school closures harm children is overwhelming. As far back as last summer, public health experts at Harvard University warned that school closures are "a disaster that some students may never recover from."

Last week, the CDC concluded there is "little evidence that schools have contributed meaningfully to increased community transmission."

Last month, UNC and Duke researchers with the ABC Science Collaborative reported "no instances of child-to-adult transmission of SARS-CoV-2 were reported within schools" during their examination of 11 open school districts in North Carolina serving 90,000 students. The researchers concluded, "Our data support the concept that schools can stay open safely in communities with widespread community transmission."

Senate Bill 37 is scheduled to be heard in the Senate Education Committee tomorrow, Feb. 2.

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