



Susan L. Klar

Bill Analysis
Legislative Service Commission

H.B. 121

123rd General Assembly
(As Introduced)

Rep. Gardner

BILL SUMMARY

- Permits public or chartered nonpublic school students to use an inhaler to self-administer asthma medication with the written approval of the parent and physician.
- Removes any cause of action against a school district and its board of education or employees, or against any chartered nonpublic school or community school and its directors, officers, governing authority, or employees, if a school employee either:
 - (1) Permits a student to use an inhaler because of a good faith belief that the required written approvals had been received; or
 - (2) Prohibits the student from using an inhaler because of a good faith belief that the required written approvals had not been received.

CONTENT AND OPERATION

Self-administration of asthma medication

(secs. 3313.716(A) and 3314.03; Section 50.52.5 of H.B. 215 of the 122nd G.A.)

Current law (sec. 3313.713, not in the bill) contains extensive provisions for school districts to permit or prohibit school employees from administering medications to students, but does not expressly cover the situation where a student would self-administer medications. However, under the general authority to operate schools and establish policy for the behavior of students on school premises (secs. 3313.20, 3313.47, and 3313.661, not in the bill), many school districts have adopted policies concerning possession and use of medications by students. Presumably, some of these policies could limit the ability of a student to self-administer asthma medication under certain conditions.

The bill expressly establishes the right of a student in a public school, community school, or chartered nonpublic school to possess and use a metered dose inhaler or a dry powder inhaler either before exercise to prevent the onset of asthmatic symptoms or to treat the symptoms once they occur. The right would extend to any activity, event, or program sponsored by the student's school or in which the school participates.

In order to acquire the right to self-administer an inhalant under the bill, the student must have the written approval of both the student's physician and (if the student is a minor), the student's parent or other caretaker. In addition, the school principal must have received copies of these required written approvals.

Immunity from tort liability

(secs. 3313.716(B) and 3314.14; Section 50.52.6 of H.B. 215 of the 122nd G.A.)

School districts, community schools, and their employees acting within the scope of employment generally have immunity from tort liability in the performance of governmental functions through the political subdivision sovereign immunity law (Chapter 2744. of the Revised Code). Under that law, the provision of a system of public education is explicitly included as a governmental function and, accordingly, school districts have immunity from tort liability while providing "public education." In addition, courts have consistently held extra-curricular activities to be part of the public education function. Nonetheless, the bill specifically states that under any circumstances, neither a school district nor any member of the board of education nor any employee is liable for injury, death, or loss to person or property when a district employee prohibits a student from using an inhaler because the employee believes in good faith that the required written approvals had not been received by the principal. Similarly, liability cannot accrue because the employee permits the use of an inhaler when the employee believes in good faith that the written approvals *have* been received as required by the bill.

Identical immunity is granted to community schools and their governing boards and employees. The bill explicitly states that all other immunities granted under the political subdivision sovereign immunity law still apply.

Chartered nonpublic schools, as nongovernmental entities, do not acquire immunity under the sovereign immunity law. However, the bill grants them and their employees, officers, and directors the same immunity from liability with respect to student use of inhalers that it specifies for public schools and community schools.

Grandparent may sign in lieu of parent

(sec. 3313.64)

Under some circumstances, current law permits a student to attend school in a district where the student lives with a grandparent, instead of in the district where the parents reside. In this case, the bill specifies that the grandparent may be asked by the district to complete the written "parental" approval required by the bill for use of an inhaler. The school district would incur no liability for accepting a written approval from the grandparent instead of from the parent.

HISTORY

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