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## VOTE NO ON HOUSE BILL 2789!

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House Bill 2789 is a misguided solution to a problem already solved. The bill seeks to ensure public and nonpublic schools adhere to health regulations when under a gubernatorial declaration of a public health emergency. However, the enforcement processes it creates are problematic, and two provisions stand out:

- The first is an ill-defined complaint process involving a government bureaucracy that has no public health mission or experience. Under House Bill 2789 anyone can file a complaint against any school for perceived noncompliance with Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) guidelines. This complaint is to be investigated by the school but also by the local Regional Office of Education (ROE). Why would a public health matter be investigated by the ROE?

Over the past year, when issues arose, Catholic schools worked on mitigation issues and complaints with their local public health department. They did this very successfully. This bill would turn away from that success and create a new framework for dealing with public health issues and doesn't involve public health experts.

- Second, there are serious penalties for schools, administrators and teachers proposed in the bill, while due process for adjudicating claims against them is insufficient. There does appear to be some type of appeal process for decisions made by the ROE, but it is unclear who can avail themselves of the appeal process or how exactly the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) would handle appeals. This is a matter of great importance as school operations and people's livelihoods are on the line. It is matter that cannot be left to rulemaking by the same agency tasked with handling appeals.

Catholic schools operated in-person learning throughout the past school year. We complied with the public health directives laid out by IDPH and ISBE last summer. There were difficulties and challenges for sure. When those came up, we worked with the local departments of public health – public health experts – and were successful in addressing the problem and we completed the entire year of instruction successfully. House Bill 2789 seems to want to undermine that success by creating a new, ill-designed process. It is unnecessary, wrong and should not be approved.

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