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From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate
Mecklenburg County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Greetings:

We are scheduled to have session this week. The major part of business for this long session has concluded, but we are still hanging on.

Joyce Waddell

Senator Waddell was appointed to three legislative committees during the interim. The committees are:

Joint Legislative Administrative Procedure Oversight Committee
Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee
Joint Legislative Commission on Energy Policy

New Laws

The legislature passed nearly 150 bills this year that the Governor signed into law. More than a dozen of those will go into effect at the start of 2022. While some of those bills make changes that are unlikely

to impact the daily lives of most North Carolinians, others stand to completely shift how some of the state's agencies and organizations work.

Here are some of the most important measures that became law on Jan. 1:

- **Senate Bill 473:** Enhancing local government transparency. Signed into law in November, SB 473 makes it a felony for elected officials to use their positions for their own financial benefit and blocks public officials who serve on nonprofit boards from voting to award contracts to those organizations. "There has to be some consequences for these local government, local elected officials who are abusing their positions," said the State Auditor who championed the legislation, in a November committee hearing.
- **Senate Bill 693:** Expediting child safety and permanency. Led by a bipartisan group of lawmakers, a provision of SB 693 that goes into effect on Jan. 1 helps get children in the welfare system into permanent homes or placements more quickly. The new law, much of which is already in effect, will also allow parents who test positive for drugs to continue visits with their children and furthers efforts to keep siblings together.
- **House Bill 366:** Regulatory reform. HB 366 consists of numerous measures included in a 2019 regulatory reform bill that never became law, the NC Insider reported earlier this year. The legislation allows for remote building inspections.
- **House Bill 436:** Law enforcement mental health. Police officers will be required to undergo psychological screening and be educated on mental health and wellness strategies.
- **House Bill 890:** Changing Alcohol Beverage Control Commission laws. HB 890 makes changes to laws regulating distribution of liquor and further deregulates the alcohol industry in North Carolina.
- **Senate Bill 103:** Deregulating some professionals who care for kids with autism. North Carolina behavior analysts who provide therapy to a range of patients, including kids with autism, will now be able to practice independently without oversight from licensed psychologists. A provision in this law effective Jan. 1 makes it illegal for these practitioners to practice without a license.

School Precautions

In a Thursday update of the North Carolina Dept. of Public Instruction's coronavirus toolkit, state officials said that students who

are up-to-date on their coronavirus vaccinations don't need to quarantine if they are exposed to someone with COVID-19 — as long as they are not feeling sick. The definition of fully vaccinated in this instance is defined as a student who is up-to-date on vaccinations recommended for their age group.

If a student exposed to COVID-19 is eligible for a booster shot, and has not received one, they would need to quarantine for five days. These new recommendations from DPI do not apply to fully vaccinated students who live in a shelter. This new guidance from the state also aligns with updated guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that shortened quarantine and isolation periods.

Students who are not up-to-date on their vaccinations, and who were exposed to positive coronavirus case while not wearing a mask, need to quarantine for five days, according to the state's guidance. If the exposed student is not presenting symptoms five days later, they can return to school but must wear a well-fitting, tight mask at all times for five more days.

The state also recommends that students get tested five days after initially being exposed to the virus to ensure they are not positive. The state is also recommending that if a student has been in contact with another student who tested positive for COVID-19, but both students are wearing a mask, the exposed student does not need to quarantine. This new guidance aligns with a report released by the ABC Science Collaborative on Wednesday. The co-chair of the collaborative, said rapid antigen testing in schools could help exposed kids stay in the classroom as long as they are masked up. He said on the day a school is notified that a student has been infected, the school would administer rapid tests to all close contacts of the infected student.

Five to seven days later, the school would administer a second rapid test. The exposed close contacts would need to keep their masks on. Per current DPI rules, the positive child goes home, but the exposed child gets to stay for as long as their tests at schools are negative, and they remain asymptomatic.

DPI is also recommending that students who test positive for COVID-19 with a PCR test, but do not show symptoms, only stay out of school for five days. After the five-day period, if that student is still not showing symptoms, they can return to school but have to keep a face mask on for the next five days. If a student has symptoms of coronavirus, tests positive, but feels better five days later, they are allowed to return to school. That student would also not be required to

present proof of a negative coronavirus test, the new guidance says. The guidance does not say if that student would be required to wear a mask for five days.

This approach could reduce quarantines by as much as 90%.

Please be aware that some COVID testing sites have run out of testing kits. Make sure to contact the site before you head to get tested.

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