

Executive Summary: Health Impact Review of SB 5464

Requiring the option of in-person learning unless prohibited by the governor, secretary of health, or a local health officer (2021 Legislative Session)

Evidence indicates that SB 5464 has the potential to increase district provision and student attendance of in-person learning options, which would likely improve educational outcomes and attainment and improve health outcomes for students attending in-person instruction—specific to the COVID-19 pandemic. The impacts on equity are unclear.

BILL INFORMATION

Sponsors: Wilson, L., Braun, Brown, Dozier, Muzzall, Padden, Wagoner, and Wilson, J.

Summary of Bill:

- Restricts a school district from remaining closed for in-person learning for more than 10 consecutive scheduled school days.
- Requires the school district to offer the option of in-person learning to all students unless in-person learning is prohibited by an order, proclamation, or directive by the Governor, Secretary of Health, or a Local Health Officer.

HEALTH IMPACT REVIEW

Summary of Findings:

This Health Impact Review found the following evidence for the provisions in SB 5464:

- **Informed assumption** that requiring school districts (K-12) to offer an in-person learning option for students unless otherwise restricted would result in some number of schools complying and offering an in-person learning option for all students. This assumption is based on provisions in the bill and current law, discussions with Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) staff, and school reopening data during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Informed assumption** that school districts offering an in-person learning option for all students would result in some number of students attending in-person instruction. This assumption is based on national survey data and in-person instruction data from OSPI.
- **Strong evidence** that students attending in-person learning options will likely improve health outcomes. This discussion focuses on the current pandemic and risks specific to COVID-19.
- **A fair amount of evidence** that students attending in-person instruction would likely improve educational outcomes.
- **Very strong evidence** that improving educational outcomes would likely improve educational attainment.
- **Very strong evidence** that improving educational attainment would likely improve health outcomes.
- **Unclear evidence** of how the bill would impact educational and health inequities since Washington State is a local control state and it is unclear how requirements specified in the bill would be implemented by school districts. It is also unclear which families would choose

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to have children attend in-person instruction, especially as risks may differ depending on the initial crisis prompting school closures.

FULL REVIEW

For review methods, logic model, strength-of-evidence analyses, and citations of empirical evidence refer to the full Health Impact Review at

<https://sboh.wa.gov/Portals/7/Doc/HealthImpactReviews/HIR-2021-13-SB5464.pdf>

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