

## LEGAL COUNCIL FOR HEALTH JUSTICE

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### MEDIA RELEASE

#### **Governor Rauner Signs Legislation Ensuring Equal School Health and Safety Protections for Illinois Charter School Students**

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**August 11, 2015, Chicago** – This week Gov. Bruce Rauner signed HB 1360 (now [Public Act 099-0325](#)) into law, signaling a commitment to improving health, wellness, and safety standards throughout the Illinois charter school system. Previously, only ten percent of statewide health and safety laws required at district-run public schools were also applicable to charter schools, according to a report, “[School Health and Safety For All](#),” issued earlier this year by Chicago Medical-Legal Partnership for Children, a program of Legal Council for Health Justice. Effective immediately, the newly amended law guarantees all charters must comply with student health and safety laws applicable to publicly-funded schools across the state, and instructs the Illinois State Board of Education to publicize and post a list of all non-curricular health and safety requirements applicable to public schools on its website by September 1, 2015.

“The new law goes a long way to foster healthier schools, students, and communities in Illinois and beyond,” says report co-author, Amy Zimmerman, an attorney and director of Chicago Medical-Legal Partnership for Children, “Given that charter schools are the fastest-growing sector of public education in the United States, and that charter laws in many states contain health and safety language similar to Illinois, this legislation has national as well as local implications.”

The amendment to the Charter Schools Law to better protect the health and safety of all Illinois students was filed by Illinois Representative Robyn Gabel (18<sup>th</sup> District) and introduced in the Senate by Daniel Biss (9<sup>th</sup> District). The measure benefitted from broad support of pediatricians, educators, child health advocates, and other stakeholders. Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS) did not oppose the bill as amended.

While this marks a vast improvement to statewide application of school health and safety laws, it leaves additional improvements at the local level up to negotiation between each charter and the local school board. Notably, the “School Health and Safety Report” found Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to have health and wellness policies that go above and beyond the bar set by Illinois state law. Now, the new law gives CPS a green light to raise the bar for charter school health and safety standards, and compel inclusion of these higher quality policies in charter school contracts. There are currently 131 charter schools in Chicago.

Chicago Medical-Legal Partnership for Children plans to monitor implementation of the newly amended law, and share outcomes with the general public in 2016.

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The Chicago Medical-Legal Partnership for Children is a project of Legal Council for Health Justice (formerly AIDS Legal Council of Chicago), which uses the power of the law to secure health, dignity and opportunity for adults, children and families challenged by poverty, disability, and chronic health conditions. This innovative venture joins medical care, social support services, and legal assistance in partnership with major children’s hospitals and clinics throughout Chicago to reduce health and education disparities. [www.legalcouncil.org/cmlpc](http://www.legalcouncil.org/cmlpc)