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Wagner pushes for second look at law

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State representative takes action after Otis Elementary principal shares concerns over Jarod's Law

FREMONT -- A group of Ohio legislators believe Jarod's Law regulations need to be revised to reduce unnecessary financial burden placed on school districts.

State Rep. Jeff Wagner and 23 other representatives from around the state signed a letter recently to the Ohio Department of Health to consider re-opening their rule-making process pertaining to Jarod's Law. The law was introduced and passed in response to a tragic situation involving the death of an elementary school student because of a faulty cafeteria table.

"When we originally passed the bill years ago, it was simple, and they would do building inspections," Wagner said.

The letter states that "unintended consequences have arisen, and the rule-making process has gone too far and created large and often unnecessary financial burdens on the local school districts. Local school administrators and teachers throughout the state have expressed similar concerns."

"Nothing in the bill we passed requires this amount of detail in the regulations," the letter states. "We believe that it is imperative that Jarod's Law do what it was intended to do -- properly monitor recalled products and ensure that these products are not in the classroom."

Wagner said he originally wanted to repeal the law, but the Ohio School Boards Association and Buckeye Association of School Administrators suggested that might be too much.

"I thought let's re-open the rules and get local input from principals and superintendents," Wagner said.

Otis Elementary School Principal Denice Hirt said she thought the law seemed extreme on certain levels. She said Wagner was visiting the school last year when she pointed out some inconsistencies to him.

Hirt said the comfortable reading area in classrooms were deemed unacceptable, and by Jarod's Law the furniture has to be cleaned and wiped down nightly. An area rug and furniture has to be stuck to the ground so students don't trip.

"There are some good things in the law," she said. But being able to read in a comfortable environment is a life skill the school wants children to have.

Dr. Kimberly Theller, director of facilities and operations, said the law currently requires science and art classrooms to have showers in them.

"It's a major plumbing and draining issue, especially with the middle school being three levels," she said.

Theller also said the costs are an inconvenience and there are no additional dollars from the state.

"My budget is for keeping buildings (in the district) running normally," she said.
