



Public Health
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**Butler County
General Health District**

April 29, 2020

To whom it may concern,

In order to plan appropriately for impending graduations of seniors from high schools across Ohio, Governor DeWine today asked school districts to work along with their local public health districts in making decisions. In addition, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and Ohio Department of Health (ODH) today released guidance on a variety of options for graduations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Health Commissioner of the Butler County General Health District (and a Talawanda parent of four graduates), and at the request of the Governor and the Superintendent, I reviewed the plan being considered for the Talawanda School District graduation. The plan calls for a virtual graduation ceremony in 2020.

Not only do I fully support and approve Talawanda's plan for a virtual graduation, I applaud it.

Mr. Theroux made the difficult decision to put the health needs of the school community first. He chose the option considered by public health, ODE and ODH to be the safest. Indeed, in today's guidance from ODE and ODH both urge school districts "to be thoughtful and careful in choosing and planning the best way to celebrate graduation and other milestones...virtual graduation ceremonies are the safest. We strongly recommend this approach."

A virtual graduation is preferred because it best protects the health, safety and well-being of all members of the Talawanda community, some of whom have underlying conditions that put them at particular risk. Standard graduations far exceed the rule of "fewer than 10 persons at gatherings" and are not recommended at this time in the pandemic. It would be impossible to maintain adequate social/physical distancing for a graduation event. Though they are not anyone's favorite option, of all the options available, virtual graduations are given the highest endorsement.

I fully endorse the decision for a virtual graduation at Talawanda in 2020, and I wish all the seniors the very, very best as they embark on their next adventure.

Jennifer Bailer, RN, MS
Health Commissioner