



# SENATE BILL 115: Students, Parents, Community Rights Act.

2021-2022 General Assembly

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<b>Committee:</b>	Senate Rules and Operations of the Senate	<b>Date:</b>	February 25, 2021
<b>Introduced by:</b>	Sens. Johnson, Sawyer, McInnis	<b>Prepared by:</b>	Brian Gwyn*
<b>Analysis of:</b>	Second Edition		Staff Attorney

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**OVERVIEW:** *Senate Bill 115 is a local bill that would permit increased access to outdoor sporting facilities in public and nonpublic high schools in the following counties: Alamance, Anson, Haywood, Iredell, Moore, Onslow, Randolph, Richmond, Rockingham, Scotland, Stokes, Surry, Union, and Yadkin.*

**CURRENT LAW:** Sec. 3.2.d. of Executive Order 195, issued by Gov. Cooper on February 24, 2021, limits guests in spectator stands and viewing areas at an outdoor sporting facility, stadium, or sporting complex to 30% of the facility's stated outdoor occupancy. For spaces without a stated outdoor occupancy, no more than seven guests are permitted for every 1,000 square feet of the outdoor area's square footage. Sec. 5.2.a of Executive Order 195 applies these restrictions to educational institutions.

**BILL ANALYSIS:** Senate Bill 115 would require, for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, public and nonpublic high schools to set capacity limits for spectators at outdoor sporting events to no more than 50% of the facility's approved occupancy capacity under the fire code. For facilities without occupancy capacities under the fire code, no more than seven persons for every 1,000 square feet would be allowed.

If an outdoor sporting facility allows spectators to bring their own seats, individuals who sit in their own seats would not count toward the limit on the number of spectators if they maintain at least six feet of distance between themselves and anyone outside of their family unit.

For the purposes of Senate Bill 115, "spectators" would not include athletes, employees of a public or nonpublic high school, entertainers, or staff providing support for the sporting event.

Individual schools, at the discretion of their governing bodies, could choose to implement more strict access to outdoor sporting events.

Schools would still be required to comply with nonconflicting portions of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' (NCDHHS) StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12) as of February 2, 2021, and Interim Guidance for Administrators and Participants of Youth and Amateur Sports Programs as of January 28, 2021.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** The bill would be effective when it becomes law.

**BACKGROUND:** DHHS's [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#) provides guidance for families, students, and local education leaders for health practices that must be met as students return to

Jeffrey Hudson  
Director



Legislative Analysis  
Division  
919-733-2578

# Senate Bill 115

Page 2

school. DHHS's [Interim Guidance for Administrators and Participants of Youth and Amateur Sports Programs](#) provides recommendations for conducting sports activities.

Senate Bill 115 may give rise to Constitutional considerations:

- Article II, Section 24(1)(a) of the North Carolina Constitution prohibits local acts relating to health, sanitation, and the abatement of nuisances and provides that such local acts are void. In March of 2020, the Governor began issuing Executive Orders to address the COVID-19 health pandemic. If Senate Bill 115 was determined to be within one of these categories, then it could be subject to a constitutional challenge.
- Article I, Section 6 of the North Carolina Constitution provides that the three branches of government's powers "shall be forever separate and distinct from each other." Whether or not a local act may override an Executive Order under the Emergency Management Act has not been explicitly addressed by the courts.

*\*Brad Krehely, Billy R. Godwin, and R. Erika Churchill, Staff Attorneys for the Legislative Analysis Division, contributed substantially to the drafting of this summary.*