Closure of Michigan Schools Due to Coronavirus Concerns Creates Host of Legal Issues

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On March 12, 2020 Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and State Superintendent Michael Rice announced that all K-12 school buildings are ordered to be closed from Monday, March 16 to Sunday April 5, 2020 to slow the spread of COVID-19. Several other states implemented similar measures, with more expected to follow suit.

The closure of all K-12 school buildings, while a prudent step in fighting the spread of COVID-19, creates a plethora of issues for school administrators, staff, parents and students. The Michigan Department of Education has committed to assisting school districts, academies and private schools through this time period.

However, many issues will be district and school specific, such as whether and how to provide online learning opportunities, how to ensure appropriate access to food to children who receive aid, staff pay and union-related issues, assessing contracts with vendors, and crafting appropriate communication with concerned and upset parents and staff members.

Related businesses will feel the impact in at least temporary reductions in work force and loss of revenues from cancelled events.

Issues School Districts May Face
• Cascading issues caused by the closures: childcare needs, food assistance, loss of learning time, provision of educational services by alternative means, etc.
• Districts will receive general assistance from MDE, but each district will have specific community needs and resources to be able to handle closure related issues
• How to best utilize this time to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in buildings and facilities
• Dealing with contractual and vendor relationships

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