



# *ENACTMENT SUMMARY*

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## **House Bill 322** **Childhood Sexual Abuse Registry penalties; offense of** **“grooming”** Effective April 9, 2025

On January 8, 2025, Governor DeWine signed into law House Bill 322 (Rep. Seitz and Rep. Abrams), which modifies penalties for failing to properly register for the Childhood Sexual Abuse Registry, and establishes the new offense of grooming.

### **Childhood Sexual Abuse Registry**

Under existing law, when a civil action for assault or battery based on childhood sexual abuse is barred due to an expired statute of limitations, the Attorney General or prosecutor may seek a declaratory judgment from a court that a person would have been liable for the abuse but for the expired statute of limitations. Upon such a judgment, the court shall require the person to register on the Childhood Sexual Abuse Registry maintained by the Attorney General by registering with the sheriff of the county in which the person resides and the county where the person is employed.

The bill provides that failing to register as required by existing law is a civil offense, rather than criminal (as under previous law), subject to a penalty of up to \$2,500. The prosecuting attorney, upon receiving notice of the violation, has up to 45 days to initiate a civil action. After 45 days if no such action is taken, the person against whom the person would have been liable for assault or battery may initiate the action.

The bill also repeals prohibitions in prior law against the person living within 1,000 feet of any school.

### **Offense of Grooming**

The bill also establishes the new offense of “grooming.” No person who is 18 or older shall engage in a pattern of conduct with either 1) a minor who is under the age of 16 and who is four or more years younger than the offender, OR 2) a minor if the minor and the other person are in any of the relationships described in Ohio’s sexual battery statute (R.C. 2907.03), that would cause a reasonable adult to believe that the person is communicating with the minor with the purpose of doing either of the following:

- Enticing, coercing, or soliciting the minor to engage in sexual activity, either with the person or with another third party
- Preparing the minor to engage in sexual activity with the person or with another third party that would be a violation of rape, sexual battery, unlawful sexual conduct with a minor, gross sexual imposition, sexual imposition, or importuning.

Penalties for the violation range from an M2 to an F3, based on the relationship between the offender and the minor, number of prior offenses, and whether the offender supplied alcohol or drugs to the minor.

The bill passed the Ohio House by a vote of 90-1 on April 24, 2024 and the Ohio Senate by a vote of 30-0 on December 18, 2024. It was signed into law on January 8, 2025 and becomes effective on April 9, 2025.