As Reported by the House Government Oversight Committee

135th General Assembly

Regular Session 2023-2024

Sub. H. B. No. 257

Representatives Hoops, Claggett

Cosponsors: Representatives Klopfenstein, Robb Blasdel

A BILL

То	amend sections 305.02, 715.693, 924.12, 5505.04,	1
	and 5543.06 and to enact sections 121.221,	2
	145.071, 742.071, and 3309.091 of the Revised	3
	Code to authorize certain public bodies to meet	4
	virtually.	-

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:

Section 1. That sections 305.02, 715.693, 924.12, 5505.04,	6
and 5543.06 be amended and sections 121.221, 145.071, 742.071,	7
and 3309.091 of the Revised Code be enacted to read as follows:	8
Sec. 121.221. (A) As used in this section:	9
"Hearing" means an administrative hearing, hearing as	10
defined in section 119.01 of the Revised Code, or other hearing	11
at which a person may present written or oral testimony on a	12
matter before the public body.	13
"Meeting" has the same meaning as in section 121.22 of the	14
Revised Code.	15
"Public body" has the same meaning as in division (B)(1)	16
of section 121.22 of the Revised Code, except it does not	17

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<pre>include the following:</pre>	18
(1) The general assembly, or any of its committees or	19
<pre>subcommittees;</pre>	20
(2) Any court, including a mayor's court;	21
(3) The state board of education;	22
(4) The board of directors of the bureau of workers'	23
<pre>compensation;</pre>	24
(5) The Ohio elections commission;	25
(6) A board of county commissioners;	26
(7) A board of township trustees;	27
(8) The legislative authority of a municipal corporation	28
or charter county;	29
(9) A city, local, or exempted village board of education;	30
(10) A board of elections.	31
(B) Except as otherwise provided in the Revised Code,	32
members of a public body may hold and attend meetings and may	33
conduct and attend hearings by means of video conference or any	34
other similar electronic technology, and all of the following	35
<pre>apply:</pre>	36
(1) Any resolution, rule, or formal action of any kind has	37
the same effect as if it occurred during an open meeting or	38
hearing of the public body.	39
(2) Notwithstanding division (C) of section 121.22 of the	40
Revised Code, members of a public body who attend meetings or	41
hearings by means of video conference or any other similar	42
electronic technology shall be considered present as if in	43

person at the meeting or hearing, shall be permitted to vote,	44
and shall be counted for purposes of determining whether a	45
quorum is present at the meeting or hearing.	46
(3) The public body shall not hold hearings or meetings by	47
means of video conference or any other similar electronic	48
technology until the public body has adopted a policy that	49
specifies at least all of the following:	50
(a) The public body shall provide notification of meetings	51
and hearings held under this section to the public, to the media	52
that have requested notification of a meeting, and to the	53
parties required to be notified of a hearing at least seventy-	54
two hours in advance of the meeting or hearing by reasonable	55
methods by which any person may determine the time, location,	56
agenda of the meeting or hearing, and the manner by which the	57
meeting or hearing will be conducted, except in the event of an	58
emergency requiring immediate official action, as defined by the	59
policy. In the event of an emergency, the public body shall	60
immediately notify the news media that have requested	61
notification or the parties required to be notified of a hearing	62
of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting or hearing.	63
(b) The public body shall provide the public access to a	64
meeting held under this section, and to any hearing held under	65
this section that the public would otherwise be entitled to	66
attend, commensurate with the method in which the meeting or	67
hearing is being conducted, including for example, livestreaming	68
by means of the internet, television, cable, or public access	69
channels, or by means of any other similar electronic	70
technology. The public body shall ensure that the public can	71
observe and hear the discussions and deliberations of all the	72
members of the public body, whether the member is participating	73

in person or electronically. Members of the public body shall	74
have a sufficient internet or other electronic connection to	75
allow the member to be seen and heard clearly, and shall be	76
visible at all times.	77
(c) All votes taken in the meeting or hearing shall be	78
taken by roll call vote unless there is a motion for unanimous	79
consent, and the motion is not objected to by a member of the	80
public body. If a vote is taken unanimously, the public body	81
shall provide the public with information on how the members of	82
the public body voted, including any members who abstained from	83
voting.	84
(d) Any member of the public body who intends to attend a	85
meeting by means of video conference or other similar electronic	86
technology shall notify the chairperson of that intent not less	87
than forty-eight hours before the meeting, except in the case of	88
an emergency as defined in the policy.	89
(e) No public body may hold, and no member of a public	90
body may attend meetings or conduct and attend hearings by means	91
of video conference or other similar electronic technology if	92
the meeting or hearing involves a vote to approve a major	93
nonroutine expenditure as defined in the policy adopted by the	94
public body under this section, or a significant hiring decision	95
as defined by that policy, or a vote to support a tax issue or	96
tax increase.	97
(f) If, upon the notification of an upcoming meeting of a	98
public body, and not later than forty-eight hours before the	99
meeting, the greater of at least ten per cent of the members of	100
the public body or two members of the public body, notifies the	101
chairperson of the public body that an item in the agenda must	102
be acted upon at a meeting conducted fully in person, upon the	103

chairperson's acknowledgment of receipt of the notification, the	104
public body shall take action on the item of the agenda only at	105
a meeting conducted fully in person.	106
(4) A public body shall not hold a hearing, and members of	107
a public body shall not attend a hearing, by means of video	108
conference or other similar electronic technology without the	109
consent of all parties to the hearing.	110
(C) When members of a public body conduct a meeting or	111
hearing by means of video conference or any other similar	112
electronic technology, the public body shall establish a means,	113
through the use of electronic equipment that is widely available	114
to the general public, to converse with witnesses, receive	115
documentary testimony and physical evidence, and permit public	116
comment, if applicable.	117
(D) The authority granted in this section applies	118
notwithstanding any conflicting provision of the Revised Code.	119
Nothing in this section shall be construed to negate any	120
provision of section 121.22 of the Revised Code, Chapter 119. of	121
the Revised Code, or other section of the Revised Code that is	122
not in conflict with this section. If a section of the Revised_	123
Code permits a particular public body to meet or hold hearings	124
by means of teleconference, video conference, or any other	125
similar electronic technology, that section prevails over the	126
provisions of this section with respect to that particular	127
public body. This section is not intended to eliminate, or	128
otherwise affect, any requirements under federal law.	129
Sec. 145.071. (A) Notwithstanding division (C) of section	130
121.22 of the Revised Code, the public employees retirement	131
board may adopt a policy that allows a board member to attend a	132
meeting of the board by means of video conference. The board	133

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for the current term shall make the appointment. However, if 191 such vacancy occurs because of the death, resignation, or 192 inability to take the office of an officer-elect whose term has 193 not yet begun, and the officer-elect was elected as a partisan 194 candidate, an appointment to take such office at the beginning 195 of the term shall be made by the central committee of the 196 political party that nominated the officer-elect as a candidate 197 for that office for that term. 198

A county central committee that makes an appointment under 199 division (B)(1) of this section shall meet for that purpose not 200 less than five nor more than forty-five days after the vacancy 201 occurs. Not less than four days before the date of such meeting 202 the chairperson or secretary of such central committee shall 203 send by first class mail to every member of such central 204 committee a written notice which shall state the time and place 205 of such meeting and the purpose thereof. A majority of the 206 members of the central committee present at such meeting may 207 make the appointment. The central committee may use a secret 208 ballot process to make the appointment under division (B)(1) of 209 this section. 210

- (2) If the last occupant of the office or the officerelect was elected to serve the current term as an independent
 candidate, the board of county commissioners shall make the
 appointment, except where the vacancy is in the office of county
 commissioner, in which case the prosecuting attorney and the
 remaining commissioners or a majority of them shall make the
 appointment.
- (C) Appointments made under this section shall be
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 certified by the appointing county central committee or by the
 board of county commissioners to the county board of elections
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(2) Meeting-related materials that are available before

the meeting are sent via electronic mail, facsimile, hand-

delivery, or United States postal service to each member.

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(3) In the case of an interactive video conference, the	250
board or council causes a clear video and audio connection to be	251
established that enables all meeting participants at the primary	252
meeting location to see and hear each member.	253
(4) In the case of a teleconference, the board or the	254
council causes a clear audio connection to be established that	255
enables all meeting participants at the primary meeting location	256
to hear each member.	257
(5) All board or council members have the capability to	258
receive meeting-related materials that are distributed during a	259
meeting.	260
(6) A roll call voice vote is recorded for each vote	261
taken.	262
(7) The minutes of the board or council meeting identify	263
which members remotely attended the meeting by interactive video	264
conference or teleconference.	265
If the board or council proceeds under this section, use	266
of an interactive video conference is preferred, but nothing in	267
this section prohibits the council from conducting its meetings	268
by teleconference or by a combination of interactive video	269
conference and teleconference at the same meeting.	270
(B) A board of directors or of a joint economic	271
development review council or a joint economic development	272
<u>district</u> shall adopt rules necessary to implement this section.	273
At a minimum, the rules shall do all of the following:	274
(1) Authorize members to remotely attend a meeting by	275
interactive video conference or teleconference, or by a	276
combination thereof, in lieu of attending the meeting in person;	277

(2) Establish a minimum number of members that must be	278
physically present in person at the primary meeting location if	279
the board or council conducts a meeting by interactive video	280
conference or teleconference;	281
(3) Require that not more than one member remotely	282
attending a meeting by teleconference is permitted to be	283
physically present at the same remote location;	284
physically present at the same remote location,	204
(4) Establish geographic restrictions for participation in	285
meetings by interactive video conference and by teleconference;	286
(5) Establish a policy for distributing and circulating	287
meeting-related materials to members, the public, and the media	288
in advance of or during a meeting at which members are permitted	289
to attend by interactive video conference or teleconference;	290
(6) Establish a method for verifying the identity of a	291
member who remotely attends a meeting by teleconference.	292
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Sec. 742.071. (A) Notwithstanding division (C) of section	293
121.22 of the Revised Code, the board of trustees of the Ohio	294
police and fire pension fund may adopt a policy that allows a	295
board member to attend a meeting of the board by means of video	296
conference. The board shall include in the policy, if adopted,	297
both of the following:	298
(1) The number of regular meetings at which each board	299
member shall be present in person, provided that number is not	300
less than one-half of the regular meetings of the board	301
<pre>annually;</pre>	302
(2) All of the following requirements with respect to a	303
meeting in which a member attends by means of video conference:	304
(a) That at least one-third of the board members attending	305

the meeting shall be present in person at the physical location	306
where the meeting is conducted;	307
(b) That all votes taken at the meeting shall be taken by	308
<pre>roll call vote;</pre>	309
(c) That a board member who intends to attend a meeting by	310
means of video conference shall notify the chairperson of that	311
intent not less than forty-eight hours before the meeting,	312
except in the case of an emergency as defined in the policy.	313
(B) Notwithstanding division (C) of section 121.22 of the	314
Revised Code, a board member who attends a meeting by means of	315
video conference is considered present in person at the meeting,	316
may vote at the meeting, and is counted for purposes of	317
determining whether a quorum is present at the meeting.	318
(C) At any meeting in which a board member attends by	319
means of video conference, the board shall ensure that the	320
public can hear and observe the discussions and deliberations of	321
all the members of the board, whether the member is	322
participating in person or electronically.	323
(D) Except as provided in this section, no person shall do	324
any of the following:	325
(1) Limit the number of board members who may attend a	326
meeting by means of video conference;	327
(2) Limit the total number of meetings that the board may	328
allow members to attend by means of video conference;	329
(3) Limit the number of meetings at which any one board	330
member may attend by means of video conference;	331
(4) Impose other limits or obligations on a board member	332
because the board member attends a meeting by means of video	333

conference.	334
Sec. 924.12. (A) The director of agriculture may	335
temporarily suspend the operation of a marketing program, or any	336
part thereof, for any reason, upon recommendation by the	337
operating committee for the program, for a period of not more	338
than twelve consecutive months.	339
(B) At least once in each five years of operation, or at	340
any time upon written petition by the lesser of twenty per cent	341
or one thousand of the producers affected by a marketing	342
program, the director shall give public notice by analogy to	343
division (A) of and conduct a hearing under division (C) of	344
section 119.03 of the Revised Code to consider the continuation	345
of the program. The director may conduct the hearing by means of	346
video conference or any other similar electronic technology in	347
accordance with section 121.221 of the Revised Code. The	348
director shall file a copy of the public notice with the	349
director of the legislative service commission for purposes of	350
publishing the public notice in the register of Ohio.	351
(C) Within thirty days after the close of any hearing to	352
consider the continuation of a marketing program, the director	353
of agriculture shall recommend continuation or termination of	354
the program, and shall give public notice of the recommendation	355
by publication in the register of Ohio. The director also shall	356
provide notice of the recommendation to any person who, in	357
writing, has requested notification and may give whatever other	358
notice the director reasonably considers necessary to ensure	359
that notice is constructively given to all persons who are	360
affected by the program.	361
(D) When the director recommends termination of a	362
marketing program, the director shall, within forty-five days,	363

conduct a referendum to determine whether the affected producers	364
favor the proposed termination. The affected producers favor the	365
termination of the program if a majority of the producers who	366
vote in the referendum vote in favor of termination of the	367
program.	368
Sec. 3309.091. (A) Notwithstanding division (C) of section	369
121.22 of the Revised Code, the school employees retirement	370
board may adopt a policy that allows a board member to attend a	371
meeting of the board by means of video conference. The board	372
shall include in the policy, if adopted, both of the following:	373
(1) The number of regular meetings at which each board	374
member shall be present in person, provided that number is not	375
less than one-half of the regular meetings of the board	376
annually;	377
(2) All of the following requirements with respect to a	378
meeting in which a member attends by means of video conference:	379
(a) That at least one-third of the board members attending	380
the meeting shall be present in person at the physical location	381
where the meeting is conducted;	382
(b) That all votes taken at the meeting shall be taken by	383
<pre>roll call vote;</pre>	384
(c) That a board member who intends to attend a meeting by	385
means of video conference shall notify the chairperson of that	386
intent not less than forty-eight hours before the meeting,	387
except in the case of an emergency as defined in the policy.	388
(B) Notwithstanding division (C) of section 121.22 of the	389
Revised Code, a board member who attends a meeting by means of	390
video conference is considered present in person at the meeting,	391
may vote at the meeting, and is counted for purposes of	392

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(d) One member, known as the treasurer of state's	420
investment designee, who shall be appointed by the treasurer of	421
state for a term of four years and who shall have the following	422
qualifications:	423
(i) The member is a resident of this state.	424
(ii) Within the three years immediately preceding the	425
appointment, the member has not been employed by the public	426
employees retirement system, police and fire pension fund, state	427
teachers retirement system, school employees retirement system,	428
or state highway patrol retirement system or by any person,	429
partnership, or corporation that has provided to one of those	430
retirement systems services of a financial or investment nature,	431
including the management, analysis, supervision, or investment	432
of assets.	433
(iii) The member has direct experience in the management,	434
analysis, supervision, or investment of assets.	435
(iv) The member is not currently employed by the state or	436
a political subdivision of the state.	437
(e) Two investment expert members, who shall be appointed	438
to four-year terms. One investment expert member shall be	439
appointed by the governor, and one investment expert member	440
shall be jointly appointed by the speaker of the house of	441
representatives and the president of the senate. Each investment	442
expert member shall have the following qualifications:	443
(i) Each investment expert member shall be a resident of	444
this state.	445
(ii) Within the three years immediately preceding the	446
appointment, each investment expert member shall not have been	447
employed by the public employees retirement system, police and	448

fire pension fund, state teachers retirement system, school	449
employees retirement system, or state highway patrol retirement	450
system or by any person, partnership, or corporation that has	451
provided to one of those retirement systems services of a	452
financial or investment nature, including the management,	453
analysis, supervision, or investment of assets.	454
(iii) Each investment expert member shall have direct	455
experience in the management, analysis, supervision, or	456
investment of assets.	457
$\frac{(2)}{(2)}$ (2) (a) The board shall annually elect a chairperson and	458
vice-chairperson from among its members. The vice-chairperson	459
shall act as chairperson in the absence of the chairperson. A	460
majority of the members of the board shall constitute a quorum.	461
The board shall meet not less than once each year, upon	462
sufficient notice to the members. All meetings of the board	463
shall be open to the public except executive sessions as set	464
forth in division (G) of section 121.22 of the Revised Code, and	465
any portions of any sessions discussing medical records or the	466
degree of disability of a member excluded from public inspection	467
by this section.	468
(b) Notwithstanding division (C) of section 121.22 of the	469
Revised Code, the board may adopt a policy that allows a board	470
member to attend a meeting of the board by means of video	471
conference. The board shall include in the policy, if adopted,	472
the following:	473
(i) The number of regular meetings at which each board	474
member shall be present in person, provided that number is not	475
less than one-half of the regular meetings of the board	476
annually;	477

(ii) That at least one-third of the board members	478
attending the meeting shall be present in person at the physical	479
location where the meeting is conducted;	480
(iii) That all votes taken at the meeting shall be taken	481
<pre>by roll call vote;</pre>	482
(iv) That a board member who intends to attend a meeting	483
by means of video conference shall notify the chairperson of	484
that intent not less than forty-eight hours before the meeting,	485
except in the case of an emergency as defined in the policy.	486
(c) Notwithstanding division (C) of section 121.22 of the	487
Revised Code, a board member who attends a meeting by means of	488
video conference is considered present in person at the meeting,	489
may vote at the meeting, and is counted for purposes of	490
determining whether a quorum is present at the meeting.	491
(d) At any meeting in which a board member attends by	492
means of video conference, the board shall ensure that the	493
public can hear and observe the discussions and deliberations of	494
all the members of the board, whether the member is	495
participating in person or electronically.	496
(e) Except as provided in this section, no person shall do	497
any of the following:	498
(i) Limit the number of board members who may attend a	499
meeting by means of video conference;	500
(ii) Limit the total number of meetings that the board may	501
allow members to attend by means of video conference;	502
(iii) Limit the number of meetings at which any one board	503
<pre>member may attend by means of video conference;</pre>	504
(iv) Impose other limits or obligations on a board member	505

because the board member attends a meeting by means of video	506
conference.	507
(3) Any member appointed under this section shall hold	508
office until the end of the member's term or, if later, the date	509
the member's successor takes office.	510
(B) The attorney general shall prescribe procedures for	511
the adoption of rules authorized under this chapter, consistent	512
with the provision of section 111.15 of the Revised Code under	513
which all rules shall be filed in order to be effective. Such	514
procedures shall establish methods by which notice of proposed	515
rules are given to interested parties and rules adopted by the	516
board published and otherwise made available. When it files a	517
rule with the joint committee on agency rule review pursuant to	518
section 111.15 of the Revised Code, the board shall submit to	519
the Ohio retirement study council a copy of the full text of the	520
rule, and if applicable, a copy of the rule summary and fiscal	521
analysis required by division (B) of section 106.024 of the	522
Revised Code.	523
(C)(1) As used in this division, "personal history record"	524
means information maintained by the board on an individual who	525
is a member, former member, retirant, or beneficiary that	526
includes the address, electronic mail address, telephone number,	527
social security number, record of contributions, correspondence	528
with the system, and other information the board determines to	529
be confidential.	530
(2) The records of the board shall be open to public	531
inspection and may be made available in printed or electronic	532
format, except for the following which shall be excluded: the	533
member's, former member's, retirant's, or beneficiary's personal	534
history record and the amount of a monthly allowance or benefit	535

paid to a retirant, beneficiary, or survivor, except with the	536
written authorization of the individual concerned.	537
(D) All medical reports and recommendations are privileged	538
except as follows:	539
(1) Copies of such medical reports or recommendations	540
shall be made available to the individual's personal physician,	541
attorney, or authorized agent upon written release received from	542
such individual or such individual's agent, or when necessary	543
for the proper administration of the fund to the board-assigned	544
physician.	545
(2) Documentation required by section 2929.193 of the	546
Revised Code shall be provided to a court holding a hearing	547
under that section.	548
(E) Notwithstanding the exceptions to public inspection in	549
division (C)(2) of this section, the board may furnish the	550
following information:	551
Tollowing Intolmation.	551
(1) If a member, former member, or retirant is subject to	552
an order issued under section 2907.15 of the Revised Code or an	553
order issued under division (A) or (B) of section 2929.192 of	554
the Revised Code or is convicted of or pleads guilty to a	555
violation of section 2921.41 of the Revised Code, on written	556
request of a prosecutor as defined in section 2935.01 of the	557
Revised Code, the board shall furnish to the prosecutor the	558
information requested from the individual's personal history	559
record.	560
(2) Pursuant to a court order issued under Chapters 3119.,	561
3121., and 3123. of the Revised Code, the board shall furnish to	562
a court or child support enforcement agency the information	563
required under those chapters.	564
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(3) At the written request of any nonprofit organization	565
or association providing services to retirement system members,	566
retirants, or beneficiaries, the board shall provide to the	567
organization or association a list of the names and addresses of	568
members, former members, retirants, or beneficiaries if the	569
organization or association agrees to use such information	570
solely in accordance with its stated purpose of providing	571
services to such individuals and not for the benefit of other	572
persons, organizations, or associations. The costs of compiling,	573
copying, and mailing the list shall be paid by such entity.	574

- (4) Within fourteen days after receiving from the director of job and family services a list of the names and social security numbers of recipients of public assistance pursuant to section 5101.181 of the Revised Code, the board shall inform the auditor of state of the name, current or most recent employer address, and social security number of each member whose name and social security number are the same as those of a person whose name or social security number was submitted by the director. The board and its employees, except for purposes of furnishing the auditor of state with information required by this section, shall preserve the confidentiality of recipients of public assistance in compliance with section 5101.181 of the Revised Code.
- (5) The system shall comply with orders issued under section 3105.87 of the Revised Code.

On the written request of an alternate payee, as defined in section 3105.80 of the Revised Code, the system shall furnish to the alternate payee information on the amount and status of any amounts payable to the alternate payee under an order issued under section 3105.171 or 3105.65 of the Revised Code.

(6) At the request of any person, the board shall make	595
available to the person copies of all documents, including	596
resumes, in the board's possession regarding filling a vacancy	597
of an employee member or retirant member of the board. The	598
person who made the request shall pay the cost of compiling,	599
copying, and mailing the documents. The information described in	600
this division is a public record.	601
(7) The system shall provide the notice required by	602
section 5505.263 of the Revised Code to the prosecutor assigned	603
to the case.	604
(8) The system may provide information requested by the	605
United States social security administration, United States	606
centers for medicare and medicaid, public employees retirement	607
system, Ohio public employees deferred compensation program,	608
Ohio police and fire pension fund, school employees retirement	609
system, state teachers retirement system, or Cincinnati	610
retirement system.	611
(F) A statement that contains information obtained from	612
the system's records that is certified and signed by an officer	613
of the retirement system and to which the system's official seal	614
is affixed, or copies of the system's records to which the	615
signature and seal are attached, shall be received as true	616
copies of the system's records in any court or before any	617
officer of this state.	618
(G) The board may maintain records in printed or	619
electronic format.	620
Sec. 5543.06. The county engineer shall annually call a	621
meeting, within the county, at a time and place approved by the	622

board of county commissioners, of all the township and county

authorities having directly to do with the construction and	624
repair of roads and bridges within the county. At such meeting,	625
which shall be open to the general public, the engineer, or his	626
the engineer's designee, shall instruct the proper authorities	627
as to the best and most economical methods for repairing and	628
maintaining the roads and bridges of the county, so as to	629
provide a uniform system of highway work for such county. Each	630
official attending such meeting shall receive—his_the official's_	631
actual and necessary expenses, in addition to-his the official's	632
regular per diem or salary, which shall be paid by the county	633
treasurer from the road fund of the county on itemized vouchers	634
approved by the engineer.	635
The county engineer may conduct a meeting under this	636
section through means of video conference or any other similar	637
electronic technology in accordance with section 121.221 of the	638
Revised Code.	639
Section 2. That existing sections 305.02, 715.693, 924.12,	640
5505.04, and 5543.06 of the Revised Code are hereby repealed.	641