

**To: Environment and Transportation Committee**

**From: Sherry Perkins, PhD, RN, FAAN; President, Anne Arundel Medical Center**

**Re: HB 1540 –Environment and Transportation – Mold Inspections – Standards, Reporting, and Penalties**

Anne Arundel Medical Center of Luminis Health supports and seeks initiatives that improve access to quality healthcare services in Maryland. Additionally, we understand the importance of improving and addressing the upstream social determinants of health as part of that care. I am writing to you to express my support for HB 1540; in order to have a healthy community and lower the cost of care it would be best to establish uniform standards for mold and fungi assessment and limit all exposed through remediation.

Several bodies of research exist demonstrating the impact of housing on health outcomes and healthcare costs. There are several pathways connecting housing and health, including 1) stability [of housing]; 2) quality and safety; 3) affordability; and 4) neighborhood. We at Anne Arundel Medical Center understand that that the intersection of housing and healthcare lie several other factors, including availability to primary care. Our efforts with the Morris Blum Clinic, located in the Morris Blum Housing Complex, reduced unnecessary emergency department by providing appropriate primary care services within the residence center<sup>1</sup>. That said, we understand not only the importance of addressing medical needs in a community, but also the importance of safe, high-quality environments to give individuals the greatest chance to improve and sustain positive health outcomes.

At present, no existing state laws protect Marylanders from the impact of mold exposure. That said, several bodies of evidence indicate several reasons to be concerned about indoor air quality in apartments, single-family homes, schools, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities. According to the World Health Organization, occupants of damp or moldy buildings have up to a 75% greater risk of respiratory symptoms, in addition to asthma<sup>ii</sup>. Evidence-based studies indicate an increase in morbidity and mortality associated with toxic exposure for adults and children. In Maryland, as we consider the Total Cost of Care on our Medicare patients, we also should consider how increased standards and reporting measures could positively influence environments and avoid unnecessary diseases.

Spores and fungi (such as *Cladosporium*) enter living facilities through open doors and windows and can cause some respiratory distress; several other fungi (such as *Penicillium*, *Aspergillus*, *Stachybotrys*) are associated with indoor water damage and decay of environmental factors. Damp areas, often indicated by a visible water damage stain, can present signs and odors of mold and microbial growth. That said, microbial growth can be subtle and present without dampness, making regulations and oversight a necessary measure and precaution. In a 2016 study of twenty-three buildings, water leakage and



stagnant water in roofs, damp basements, and defective plumbing lead to fungal contamination. Building products most vulnerable to mold attacks include organic materials containing cellulose, wood, jute, wallpaper, drywall, and cardboard—materials found in almost all residential and public buildings. These products, mixed with dampness, serve as feeding grounds for fungi and can lead to extensive contamination<sup>iii</sup>.

We appreciate that stable, safe housing, when coupled with appropriate evidence-based practices and healthcare, can positively impact the lives of our community members. As Maryland continues its efforts to reduce readmissions and improve the lives of its residents while reducing healthcare spending, standards, regulations, and mold inspections seem a natural part of these efforts. The misery and costs of these diseases are high and create challenges for both the patients and their families. Minimizing exposure to these in-home environmental hazards protects Marylanders from the diseases and chronic conditions associated with fungi and mold.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage the Environment and Transportation Committee to give a favorable report to HB 1540.

Thank you for your consideration.



Sherry B. Perkins, PhD, RN, FAAN  
President

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05318>

<sup>ii</sup> Indoor fungal contamination: Health risk and measurement methods in hospital, home and workplaces. *Crit Rev Microbiology* 2014;40(3): 248-260

<sup>iii</sup> Exposure and Health Effects of fungi on Humans *J allergy Clin Immunology Pract.* 2016; 4(3): 396-404

