



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**House Bill 1540 - Indoor Air Quality Environment – Mold
Inspections – Standards, Reporting, and Penalties**

Testimony of Delegate Shaneka Henson

March 4, 2020

Chairman Delegate Kumar Barve
Environment and Transportation
Room 251
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis Maryland 21401

Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

Thank you Chairman Barve, Vice-Chairman Stein and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee for hearing HB 1540. I am requesting your Favorable vote on HB 1540 which would create standards for evaluating and remediating mold inside rental housing, nursing homes, schools, and daycare centers.

WHY IS THIS BILL NEEDED?

There are no standards for habitable levels of mold, no standards for remediation and very little by way of public education regarding mold. I have witnessed the mold in our state rental housing and have heard horror stories from our constituents regarding mold in nursing homes and even in our schools. The chronic negative health effects that result from mold can vary based on the population affected. Mold has been associated with cold like systems, rashes, asthma attacks and new onset Asthma, and other health effects. In an effort to provide Marylanders protection against these negative health effects, Senator Obie Patterson and I are introducing this legislation for evaluating and remediating mold in indoor environments.

WHAT DOES THIS BILL DO?

This bill would task the Maryland Department of Environment, in consultation with the Department of Health, the Department of Education, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Department of General Services to adopt regulations to protect Marylanders from the negative health effects of mold. The bill is written to accomplish this by:

1. Requiring the departments to establish uniform standards for mold assessment which can be included in existing facility inspections;
2. Requiring those departments to establish minimum habitability levels of mold, by requiring departments to
3. Establish remediation standards, and by
4. Requiring these departments to post public education on this matter.

Fifteen states as well as the District of Columbia already have legislation to erect this.

WHO DOES THIS BILL HELP?

HB 1540 would protect the **one in five Marylanders entering schools daily**, the **700,000 Maryland residents in rental properties**, and the **47,000+ residents in nursing homes** or assisted living facilities, as well as children in licensed child care centers such as summer camps and daycares. While it is hard to know exactly how many of these people are affected by mold, we do know that Maryland has a significant mold problem. Two examples of the widespread nature of the issue can be seen by looking at Howard County Public Schools, which found mold in 35 of their 77 schools during the 2018-2019 school year, and Montgomery County Code Enforcement, which found 1,825 instances of unhealthy levels of mold in Montgomery County rental homes in 2019 alone. Additional news stories highlight issues at the University of Maryland, in the City of Baltimore, and housing here in Annapolis.

THE DOLLARS AND “SENSE”

Outside of protecting the health of Marylanders, this bill is a worthwhile financial investment for the State. Mold primarily contributes to respiratory distress symptoms which are often exacerbated in asthma patients, causing asthma attacks and preventing people from being able to attend work and/or school and in some cases requiring hospitalization. The EPA cites that in 2013 children with asthma missed 13.8 million days of school while the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America shows an average of 1.7 million asthma related emergency department visits annually nationwide. Each of these has an average cost of \$1,500. Boiling this down to Maryland alone we can estimate that

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asthma related medical costs of **emergency department visits are approximately \$47.3 million.**

I would be agreeable to a friendly amendment to allow the co-occurring inspection process noted on page 6, lines 1-10 to be conducted not only by local jurisdictions, but ALSO by State agencies as may be appropriate. For instance, the Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.15.13 and 13A.16.17 respectively required the Maryland State Department of Education to annually inspect home based licensed child-care facilities and child care centers.

For the forgoing reasons I respectfully ask that members of the Environment and Transportation committee recommend favorably House Bill 1540.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Shaneka Henson
Delegate, Legislative District 30A

Quick Facts

- Average of **1.7 million emergency department visits annually nationwide because of asthma**. The average cost of one of these visits runs about \$1,500 per visit. To be estimated at \$47 million annually in ED visits for Maryland.
- The EPA has identified statistics in their “Asthma Management: A Priority for Schools” study citing that “**During 2013, children with asthma aged 5-17 missed 13.8 million days of school in a single year,**”
- In Montgomery County there were **1,825 housing violations for mold**. During calendar year 2019, 50,939 total violations of Chapter 26- Housing and Building Maintenance Standards . Of these, 1,825 violations (3.6%) were for mold.
- Each day, **one in five Americans occupies a school building**. The majority of these occupants are children. Environmental asthma triggers commonly found in school buildings include:
 - cockroaches and other pests
 - **mold resulting from excess moisture in the building**
 - dander from animals in the classroom
 - dander brought in on clothing from animals at home.
- **15 states and D.C with Mold regulations** Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Texas, Vermont, Wisconsin & The District of Columbia.
- Furthermore, the Maryland Department of Health identified Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease--a set of conditions that includes asthma (Mold being a trigger for asthma attacks)--as **Maryland's fifth leading cause of death**, killing more people than does Diabetes.