

HB 1428, Environment – Higher Education Facilities – Mold Hazards and Mold or Moisture Problems. (HB 1428), Environment – Higher Education Facilities – Mold Hazards and Mold or Moisture Problems.

Josie Shaffer

Support

Good afternoon, my name is Josie Shaffer and I am a sophomore at the University of Maryland, College Park. During the 2018-19 school year, I lived on the second floor Elkton Hall, which is the dorm that was heavily affected by mold. After a little over a month into the fall semester, I began to receive emails from the university regarding mold because myself and many others in my building started requesting Facilities Maintenance to help get mold out of our air conditioning unit and other items of furniture. On September 21st, the Department of Resident Life sent Elkton Hall an email notifying us that we will be evacuating the building so that outside vendors can clean every dorm. Around this time I also grew to be very sick. I developed a cough as well as a sore throat and felt fatigued. My floor wasn't moving to the hotel until two weeks after the email was sent so I was in an environment where I wasn't able to get better. I went to the Health Center several times where I was given an inhaler and steroids. I called the Health Center to make another appointment after I returned from the hotel because I still had the same symptoms and my eyes started to look like symptoms of allergic conjunctivitis. My symptoms did not get better after my first couple visits and eventually had to return home to Baltimore County to see my doctor because I was unable to go to class. I was then diagnosed with tonsillitis and returned back to school. My cough did not go away until I was home for winter break.

The evacuation process was a stressful event to occur during my first semester in college. It is known that freshman dorms are not 5-star hotels, but I would have never thought that I would be moving to a hotel for days a little over a month into college. Once we moved back in, it felt like it was move-in weekend all over again, in order to clean the dorms we had to take everything off the walls and all our belongings were put on moving trucks. Like many parents who have a child in college for the first time, my mom wrote her number on a sticky note and taped it to my closet wall in case my roommates needed to reach her. It is interesting however because that note was still taped on my wall when we returned from the hotels after they deep cleaned. It is important to establish regular inspections in higher education facilities so that we can take preventive steps to protect the health of other students and prevent other residence halls from needing to evacuate due to excess mold, thus I support HB1428.