

Favorable – House Bill 1540

Good Afternoon all,

My name is Toni Strong Pratt. I am an organizer, a community advocate/ activist and a passionate fighter for justice.

It is with a grateful heart that I submit my testimony in favor of HB 1540. I want to take this time thank everyone who is a signer on this bill. This piece of legislation shows me that you are truly paying attention to our environment on all levels in our state.

The problems with mold in our city alone has be more that problematic for so many people. I've had the opportunity of organizing residents in low income housing to recognize their power and use it. I've uncovered a deep dark secret that is going on in these communities and it's name is MOLD! Apartment after apartment, townhouse after townhouse that I've entered has mold and the residents and children have been subject to the illnesses of mold. Their seems to be no help in site for them. Everyone seems to want to point the finger at the other ! I've witnessed HACA having their mold remediation company tear walls out of a residents unit and tell them that they have to live their while the unit is being remediated. I've seen reports where the spores numbers are off the chart and no one should be living there and inhaling the toxicity! Call after call I get from resident for help! This is environmental injustice and its past time that this problem gets addressed.

I will share this last story. I was called to this young ladies house for help. I first saw her story in the newspaper. The walls were covered in black mold and she and her family had been living in this mold infested townhouse like this for over 1 year. The remediators would cone in and paint over the mold only for it to grow back! Her children also have serious problems with asthma and skins problems from the affects of the mold. She was finally moved as she couldn't take it anymore and had the courage to speak up. She has 8 children living with her. They moved her from a 5 bedroom to a 3 bedroom and all her belonging are packed in the living room , kitchen, and hallway with no access to move around in the event of a fire!!! I have nightmares about the residents and their living conditions. I even at times feel guilty because I get to come to a safe home and breathe fresh air , and these residents health is slowly being compromised.

I ask you to put yourself in these residents shoes. What if it were you having to live like this? What if your children were becoming sick and you had no financial means to move? What if your landlord told you that you had to live in this? What if their was no law to address this ? What would you do? Life happens to us all and these legislators understand that . I believe that is why this bill was introduced . They have weighed the pros and cons of the affects of mold and they have introduced a bill that would help protect citizens like the ones that I mentioned. It is my prayer that you as legislators would vote unanimously yes to bill HB 1540 that is long overdue. A special Thank you to Shaneka Henson for introducing this bill.

Best,

Toni Strong Pratt