

ANNE HEALEY
Legislative District 22
Prince George's County

Chair
Rules and Executive
Nominations Committee

Environment and Transportation
Committee

Chair
Local Government and
Bi-County Issues Subcommittee



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 361
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3961 · 410-841-3961
800-492-7122 Ext. 3961
Fax 301-858-3223 · 410-841-3223
Anne.Healey@house.state.md.us

District Office
Hyattsville, Maryland
Phone/Fax 301-779-4515

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House Bill 7

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

Every child in our state is entitled to a healthy school environment, to give them the best opportunity to learn and be successful. With House Bill 7, we have the opportunity to ensure that our schools are held to important health and safety standards on mold and inspections. On average a child will spend 13 percent of their life, by the age of 18, in school. Our workplaces have standards for mold and sanitations... why not our schools?

An article on CNN reported an estimated one-third or more US schools have mold and other contaminants that are serious enough to be linked to severe health effects. Our own state of Maryland falls within the estimated one-third of schools having mold issues of concern. The Baltimore Sun reported in 2018, that 30 schools in Baltimore were treated for mold spores, sometimes requiring the shutting down of schools or relocating students during mold remediation.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/bs-md-mold-in-schools-20180925-story.html>

In Prince George's County, District Heights Elementary School was closed the entire 2018-19 school year for mold remediation, after harmful mold spores were found throughout the school. Benjamin Foulouis Creative and Performing Arts Academy in Prince George's County has documented mold inside the building on children's instrument cases and in other locations throughout the school.

<https://www.asumag.com/energy/indoor-air-quality-iaq/article/20856558/mold-will-close-maryland-elementary-for-the-entire-school-year>

In July of 2019, mold was found in 35 Howard County public schools, including Glenwood Middle School, where students exposed to mold build up reported feeling sick. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/howard/ph-ho-cf-glenwood-mold-story.html> (There is a link included at the end of my testimony that further discusses this issue.)

Anne Arundel County also conducted mold remediation at schools throughout the county, including Shady Side, Brock Bridge, Jessup, Manor View and Georgetown East elementary schools.

<https://www.capitalgazette.com/education/ac-cn-mold-cleaned-schools-20181001-story.html>

The negative health effects of exposure to mold can lead to asthma and other respiratory illnesses, allergic reactions, sore throat, sinus congestion, cough, and skin rashes. Further, children with pre-existing conditions, like asthma, have a higher risk for serious health issues as a result of elevated mold spores.

This health concern is not going away, and will only increase as record yearly rainfall, combined with hotter summers, leads to increased levels of moisture in our school buildings. Moisture build up can also come from faulty plumbing, roofing leaks, poor drainage or delayed maintenance.

In 2017 the Maryland legislature successfully enacted House Bill 270, requiring the Department of the Environment, in consultation with the State Department of Education, the Department of General Services and the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health Department to adopt regulations requiring periodic inspections for the presence of lead in the drinking water of occupied public and nonpublic schools.

House Bill 7 is closely modeled after this legislation and will help address health concerns by requiring the Department of the Environment, in consultation with the State Department of Education, the Department of General Services and the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health Department, to adopt regulations requiring periodic inspections of occupied schools for the presence of “mold hazards” or “mold or moisture problems.” It further outlines steps that must be taken if mold issues are found to exist.

The fiscal note attached to this proposed legislation could be reduced, if the stakeholder group making recommendations regarding regulations were to phase in the inspections by identifying schools most in need of remediation, due to health concerns over mold.

Now is the time to establish guidelines for a healthier school environment for our children. I urge you to give House Bill 7 a favorable report, and allow Maryland to set a precedent for a healthy and safe learning environment.

Below is a Youtube video addressing parental concerns over mold found at Glenwood Middle School, discussed earlier.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqAVX4NAdFo&feature=youtu.be>