

Dear Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of white folks working as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. I am also resident of MD District 43 and work as a data analyst. I am testifying **in support of House Bill 129 — Mold Inspection: Standards, Reporting, and Penalties.**

Mold contributes to serious health issues. Allergic reactions can be immediate or delayed, it can cause asthma attacks, and mold exposure can irritate the eyes, skin, nose, throat, and lungs of both mold-allergic and non-allergic people. Mold is also known to cause asthma and life-threatening primary and secondary infections in immune-compromised patients. Toxic mold exposure has also been linked to more serious, long-term effects like memory loss, insomnia, anxiety, depression, trouble concentrating, and confusion. Particularly in children with immune-suppressed systems, toxic black mold can become deadly. It can lead to hemorrhagic pneumonia, which causes bleeding of the lung tissue.

There are no required mold inspections in Maryland public schools despite a clear problem that has been reported in many counties. One elementary school had to be closed down for an entire year due to mold. (<https://www.asumag.com/energy/indoor-air-quality-iaq/article/20856558/mold-will-close-maryland-elementary-for-the-entire-school-year>). One teacher quit due to health problems related to mold in Howard County, where mold levels in many schools were above industry standards. Children can't quit school.

In nursing homes, molds can be especially harmful for a number of reasons. Depending on their physical condition, residents may have diminished immune systems and are at greater risk for harmful airborne substances. And many seniors are not able to clean off molds themselves. Seniors and disabled residents at Claiborne Place had seeping walls and mushrooms coming up the floor, which an infrequent inspection noted as "life-threatening." (<https://www.capitalgazette.com/news/ac-cn-claiborne-place-mushrooms-20180725-story.html>). How is this acceptable?

For years, people like Tameka Wright of Annapolis raised concerns and asked for action to remediate the mold that harmed her and her children in their public housing apartment. Eventually the place was deemed "unfit for human habitation." I was deeply moved when I read about Tameka's plight — and that of so many others. It is imperative for us to speak out when others cannot for fear of being put out of their homes. (<https://www.capitalgazette.com/maryland/annapolis/ac-cn-robinwood-mold-annapolis-haca-20200224-20200224-olgznrqgdrfqdp6xe56yjtecfi-story.html>)

Multiple vulnerable populations of Marylanders who do not have the power to change the mold situation need you to act on their behalf and pass this legislation. They need elected officials to act responsibly to protect them by establishing standards for mold inspection, providing requirements for reporting, and making sure there are penalties for noncompliance.

Baltimore has one of the highest childhood asthma rates in the county and as someone with asthma myself, a lack established standards for mold inspections means my life is put at risk every time I step into a new building in the state.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in **support of House Bill 129**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Smeton
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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

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