

**Testimony SUPPORT of House Bill 783
Public Schools – Mold Assessment and Remediation**

**House Appropriations Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 783, which requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in consultation with other state agencies, to develop and adopt regulations that establish uniform standards for mold assessment and remediation in public schools. The bill also requires results of mold assessments to be posted in an accessible location on local board of education websites.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA appreciates the House and Senate sponsors' work with MSEA and our local affiliates in Baltimore County, the Teachers Association of Baltimore County (TABCO) and the Education Support Professionals of Baltimore County (ESPBC), on this matter. This bill would help bring more health and safety standards to the learning conditions for students and working conditions for educators.

After almost ten years of struggle to address concerns about air quality, specifically at Parkville Middle School in Baltimore County, TABCO was compelled to file a grievance in 2018 to get legitimate health and safety concerns addressed by the County Board of Education. That grievance progressed to an arbitration. The arbitrator concluded in February 2021, that the Board failed to maintain a safe and healthy environment in the school and the Board failed to undertake a timely inspection of the mold problem by qualified staff.

Mold continues to be an issue in our schools and will only get worse with climate change when the state will "warmer and wetter conditions with more extreme weather events"¹. And while the state is working diligently to improve HVAC systems in public

¹ <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/environment-natural-resources/program-areas/coastal-climate-program/climate-change-maryland> (Accessed 2/24/2)

schools around the state, many still do not have air conditioning, which further exacerbates mold. In 2018 30 schools in Baltimore City were treated for mold², and in the same year 500 freshman students at the University of Maryland, College Park had to be moved from dorms to nearby hotels due to mold problems.³ District Heights Elementary in Prince George’s County was shut down due for an entire year due to the severity of the mold issue there⁴, and in 2019 mold was found in 35 Howard County schools⁵. This is a problem across the state, with many more examples.

School systems should have a uniform set of standards and regulations for mold assessment and remediation. All students, no matter their zip code, have a right to learn to in a healthy environment, which is why MSDE must develop these standards. This bill would help ensure that credible reports of mold, made by students, educators, community members, are dealt with in a timely fashion. Stakeholders in schools must have faith in the process and know that their concerns will be taken seriously. This not only helps improve the conditions in schools but helps engender trust between student, staff, the administration, and the board of education.

House Bill 783 also requires that results of a mold assessment are posted online promptly. This would bring greater transparency to concerns from stakeholders about air quality in their public schools. The community has a right to know the results of these tests so they are able to effectively advocate for solutions.

MSEA urges a Favorable Report on House Bill 783.

² <https://www.baltimoresun.com/education/bs-md-umd-mold-20180924-story.html> (Accessed 2/24/22)

³ <https://www.baltimoresun.com/education/bs-md-umd-mold-20180924-story.html> (Accessed 2/24/22)

⁴ <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/prince-georges-co-elementary-school-closing-for-mold-concerns/173282/> (Accessed 2/24/22)

⁵ <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/howard/cng-ho-howard-schools-mold-findings-0725-20190723-kcsdtmorkfaajbuim4ijqep5y-story.html> (Accessed 2/24/22)