



Green & Healthy Homes Initiative®

2714 Hudson Street
Baltimore, MD 21224-4716

P: 410-534-6447

F: 410-534-6475

www.ghhi.org

March 29, 2022

Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
3 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **FAVORABLE** – HB1290 – Public School Construction – Funding and Administration

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) is the nation's largest healthy homes organization, dedicated to addressing the social determinants of health and advancing racial and health equity through the creation of healthy, safe, and energy efficient homes. By delivering a standard of excellence, GHHI aims to eradicate the negative health impacts of unhealthy housing and unjust policies for children, seniors, and families to ensure better health, economic, and social outcomes with an emphasis on black and brown and low-income communities. The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative has been on the frontline of holistic healthy housing in Maryland for over thirty years.

For decades, lead poisoning has been a leading contributor to learning disabilities, speech development problems, loss of IQ, attention deficit disorder and aggressive behavior, which results in poor school performance and increased school drop-out rates. Millions of dollars are spent on special education and juvenile justice costs in Maryland to combat the effects of lead poisoning, and thousands of children enter our public school systems with impediments to their development, unable to achieve academically at the rate of their classmates.

Lead is a toxic substance that can accumulate in the body over time and our youngest school age children are most at risk. The CDC states that young children are the greatest at risk of absorbing lead from their environments and research shows that lead in paint, soil and dust is a significant source of exposure for this age group. We must ensure that lead's harmful impacts on the developing brains and bodies of children is not occurring in the very buildings where they have come to learn and grow. HB1290 improves school safety standards by supporting more frequent inspection and remediation of surfaces in schools that may contain lead-based paint, and improving public reporting regimens for identified lead paint in schools.

Elevated carbon dioxide levels in classrooms negatively impacts school performance including decision making, focus, cognitive performance, and problem resolution. Elevated carbon dioxide levels affect respiratory amplitude and can cause asthma episodes or difficulty breathing. In addition to cognitive impairment and respiratory impacts on the human body, elevated carbon

GHHI Written Testimony – HB1290
March 29, 2022
Page Two


dioxide levels cause fatigue, headaches, dizziness, and physiological changes in circulatory and cardiovascular systems such as elevated blood pressure and increased heart rate.

Over 500,000 children and adults in Maryland have been diagnosed with asthma. Asthma is the number one reason that children miss school. Nationally, 14.4 million school days and 14.2 million work days are missed due to asthma episodes. Poor indoor air quality contributes to the exacerbation of asthma conditions and results in asthma episodes and increased absenteeism for students from school.

Improving the frequency and standards for carbon dioxide testing and establishing levels at which remediation is required for schools is needed in Maryland to improve indoor air quality. Cost effective measures are available to improve ventilation and increase air filtration in schools to reduce carbon dioxide levels that are elevated.

Maryland students, parents, teachers, and school administrators need to know that the inspection and regulatory standards we have set for lead paint hazards and levels of carbon dioxide in schools is based on current science and that their schools are safe. Maryland must improve the frequency of lead paint and carbon dioxide inspections, improve remediation protocols for lead hazards and elevated carbon dioxide levels and make the investments necessary for safer schools. The passage of HB1290 will better protect children's health and provide them with the opportunity to thrive. We ask for a Favorable report on HB1290.

Respectfully submitted,

DocuSigned by:

1A42B3060D6A435...
Ruth Ann Norton
President and CEO