

**SB576 - FAV - MSEA, Zwerling.pdf**

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Position: FAV

**Testimony SUPPORT of Senate Bill 576  
Public Schools – Air Quality Testing – Posting Online**

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
February 24, 2022**

**Samantha Zwerling  
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 576, which requires county boards of education to retain the services of an indoor air investigator, to make results of air quality tests available online, and submit the results to the Maryland State Department of Education.

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 sponsor's work with us 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.

After almost ten years of struggle to address concerns about air quality, specifically at Parkville Middle School, 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.

By requiring the local boards of education to have an air quality inspector on retainer, they will be able to respond to concerns at a quicker pace. Educators feel like their concerns aren't heard, and they are put into unsafe situations. This bill would great more trust in the process between educators and administrators.

This bill would also bring greater transparency to concerns from faculty, staff and students from around the state, about air quality in their schools. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a greater focus on air quality issues, and 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 Senate Bill 576.**

**Senate Bill 576\_FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Caroline Jiang

Position: FWA

# **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

*with Amendments*

Testimony to the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

In Amended Support of

Senate Bill 576: Public Schools– Air Quality Testing– Posting Online (with Amendments)

February 24, 2022

## **Strong Schools Maryland urges an amended favorable vote on Senate Bill 576: Public Schools– Air Quality Testing–Posting Online.**

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future envisions a world-class system of public schools for our state’s students. A healthy and safe learning environment for students and school staff is vital to the realization of this vision. Healthy, safe, and secure school facilities enable students, teachers, and school staff to be at their best. A well-maintained and safe physical environment fosters students’ abilities to display improved academic achievement while also contributing towards greater teacher morale and job satisfaction.

Senate Bill 576 would:

- Ensure that schools have good indoor air quality for its students and staff; and
- Provide clear and easy to locate information on results of air quality for the public to access on the State Department of Education and county boards’ websites.

We recommend the following amendments to further the intent of the bill:

- Inclusion of a State grant program or other equitable funding provision that allows local school systems with high-need to receive financial support to contract qualified indoor air quality investigators without trading off against resources for students;
- Require direct notification to school-based staff, students, and their families about the results of the air quality test as well as community engagement and decision-making power in what happens next; and
- Creation of an incentive to enhance equity overall, such as giving a certain amount from the State grant if schools use the services of women or minority-owned businesses.

The health and safety of students and school staff is essential to the success of a world-class system of public schools in Maryland highlighted in the Blueprint. By passing Senate Bill 576, the Maryland General Assembly would be taking a step towards building an environment for teachers and students that is conducive to success in learning and improvement to morale. We urge an amended favorable report on Senate Bill 576.

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*If you have questions or requests for additional information, you can email:*

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# **SB 576.School Air Quality Testing.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF

**BILL:** Senate Bill 576  
**TITLE:** Public Schools - Air Quality Testing - Posting Online  
**DATE:** February 24, 2022  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 576, which appears intended to require the use of outside private contractors to conduct indoor air quality assessments of schools.

MABE agrees that ensuring indoor air quality in the public school setting is an important component of a school system's strategy to maintain healthy school environments. MABE has promoted the use of the U.S. EPA's Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Tools for Schools guidelines and kit. MABE recognizes the value of these tools in helping to ensure good indoor air quality, and reduce the risks of student and employee health problems. In light of the existing breadth and depth of school facilities maintenance staff activities relating to using best practices, MABE does not believe the proposal to require the use of private contractors would be a cost-effective use of limited resources.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in revisions to public health and safety standards for all commercial buildings, including revised guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for school facilities. These standards have resulted in a wide array of previously unbudgeted investments in building systems, equipment, supplies, and school maintenance and custodial personnel. Fortunately, significant federal funding was provided to local school systems to support COVID-19 responses to ensure the safe operation of school facilities, including: purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies to sanitize school facilities; and inspection, testing, maintenance, repair, and installation of new systems to improve the indoor air quality in school facilities, including heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, filtering, purification and other air cleaning, fans, control systems, and window and door repair and replacement. However, in order to sustain the benefits of these one-time COVID-related expenditures local school systems are in need of increased investments by the State and local governments for school facilities maintenance personnel and maintenance budgets.

Local school systems are currently devoting staff time and resources to efforts to provide healthy school environments, including addressing indoor air quality issues. Risk managers and facility maintenance staff recognize the need for a comprehensive preventative management strategy, including educating and training staff, and providing them with the maintenance budgets to support these strategies. For example, routine cleaning and/or replacement of filters for HVAC systems is a simple yet essential component of a successful IAQ program. In addition, routine monitoring coupled with prompt responses to problems when they do occur can avoid the emergence of more serious and costly problems. These are examples of best practices that must be vigorously and continually implemented to ensure that indoor air quality does not become a negative factor for our students and teachers.

Federal guidance recognizes that the use of private consultants and testing services may be appropriate in limited, specialized cases. However, these situations are identified as involving lead, asbestos, radon and other public health hazards, rather than the routine, school community-based approach featuring school system staff monitoring and responding to identified issues through maintenance.

Again, MABE agrees that indoor air quality in public schools is a very important health issue. However, MABE would prefer to focus on securing sufficient state and local funding for school construction and maintenance programs, and promoting the accepted best practices described above, rather than on outsourcing IAQ testing. For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 576.