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Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning. It's Union Work!

Name of Witness: Jennifer Martin
Organization: Montgomery County Education Association
Title: President
Bill No: HB686
Position: Favorable
Date of Testimony: February 25, 2022
Type: Both

Good afternoon, my name is Jennifer Martin, President of the Montgomery County Education Association, which represents over 14,000 public school employees.

I want to thank Delegate Jared Solomon for introducing House Bill 686, the Safe School Indoor Air Act.

The Safe School Indoor Air Act is straightforward legislation that will improve the learning environment for students and working conditions for educators. House Bill 686 commits the state of Maryland to ensuring air quality standards in schools are met and at a time when we are still navigating a public health crisis. This legislation introduces important safeguards for students' and educators' health.

As COVID-19 continues to affect our economy, health systems, and classrooms, House Bill 686 ensures that Maryland's schools are protected against airborne containments and pathogens. The policy outlined in HB686 would give peace of mind to our students and parents, who have suffered so much over the last two years as they have endured the hardships caused by COVID.

Schools throughout the state, and in Montgomery County, too often have faulty or inadequate vents, fans, and sensors. Furthermore, lower air quality standards are disproportionately seen in schools that serve communities of color. By codifying indoor air quality standards, best practices, and safety protocols, the Safe School Indoor Air Act will reduce illness, infection, and improve learning and working conditions for all.

Like our students, our teachers, administrators, and support personnel --all frontline workers-- deserve to know that their schools are always safe. This legislation is common-sense reform that would enable schools to improve air ventilation and filtration, thereby improving the air quality within confined spaces, like classrooms.

The Montgomery County Education Association supports House Bill 686 because clean air is essential to promoting healthy learning conditions for students and safe working conditions for educators.