

Committee: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB 665 – Public Schools - Air Quality Testing - Posting Online

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 24, 2022

I am writing in support of the making the results of air quality testing in schools publicly accessible. I am the parent of two children who attend Baltimore County Public Schools. I am also a scientist and study issues related to air and water quality.

Air quality is a health issue that is often overlooked, especially when it comes to indoor air quality. Indoor air quality problems can lead to short-term health impacts on students and teachers such as coughing and headaches and aggravate asthma. In Maryland ~7.6% of children have asthma¹ and nationwide millions of school days are missed due to childhood asthma.² It is important that schools have adequate air quality to keep children in school and both staff and children healthy.

While this bill does not compel districts to measure indoor air quality, it does require that schools report on the indoor air quality in a way that is accessible to stakeholders. This is important because it is sometimes difficult to identify triggers of asthma or allergies and knowing the results of an air quality analysis will help staff, parents, and students identify if the school building could be a source of a trigger or ruled out as a source.

In my son's middle school, there is a high humidity issue in many classrooms that lead to a mold testing. Parents, students, and staff were not made aware of the results of the testing for mold or the steps that have been taken to mitigate this issue. While there are many other environmental metrics I would like to know about the schools in my district, it seems clear that transparency should be a top priority. I appreciate this bill will make sure that results of these tests are transparent and accessible to all stakeholders.

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¹ Maryland Department of Health, "Pages - Asthma."

² "Asthma-Related Missed School Days among Children Aged 5–17 Years | CDC."