

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 835  
Public Schools – Heating, Ventilation, and Air-Conditioning Systems and  
Carbon Dioxide Monitors – Monitoring and Reporting Requirements**

**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
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The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 835. Senate Bill 835 is an important piece of legislation to ensure all Maryland students and educators have healthy indoor air quality. Under the bill, the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) must complete an initial statewide heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems assessment of all public-school facilities on or before July 1, 2025. Following the initial statewide assessment, the IAC must develop uniform HVAC standards, which will be incorporated into the educational facilities sufficiency standards. Senate Bill 835 also ensures that the assessments, repairs, upgrades, or installations of new HVAC systems are performed by highly qualified professionals.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. 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).

Poor indoor air quality impacts everyone within a school building including, students, educators, and other school employees. Short-term and long-term exposure to indoor air pollution may cause a myriad of health issues, including “respiratory diseases, heart disease, cognitive deficits, and cancer.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, *Indoor Air Quality*,  
<https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/indoor-air/index.cfm> (last accessed, 2/22/2023).



A variety of sources both inside and outside the building may contribute to indoor air pollution, such as poor ventilation, the level of humidity, recent renovations or remodeling in a building, contaminants from mold, cleaning supplies, or other airborne chemicals, and issues with temperature control.<sup>2</sup>

Asthma is the leading cause of absenteeism due to chronic illness among school aged children, and nearly one in thirteen school age children are reported to have asthma.<sup>3</sup> A substantial amount of evidence exists that exposure to indoor environmental allergens triggers asthma symptoms.<sup>4</sup> A properly functioning and well-maintained HVAC system is key to preventing harmful pollutants impacting students and school employees. However, research demonstrates that a substantially large number of public schools need critical HVAC repairs or replacements. In 2020, research found that approximately forty-one percent of school districts needed to repair or replace their HVAC systems in half of their school buildings, which represents approximately 36,000 schools nationwide that need HVAC repairs or replacements.<sup>5</sup>

Senate Bill 835 will ensure that every public school in the state of Maryland has a properly maintained and well-functioning HVAC system by establishing a comprehensive HVAC system standard for all public schools, make certain that highly qualified professionals are evaluating, repairing, upgrading, and installing HVAC systems, and requiring corrective action plans for local education agencies to follow if necessary to address issues with their HVAC systems. Senate Bill 835 is an essential investment in the health of our students and school employees.

**We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 835.**

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<sup>2</sup> Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Dep't of Labor, *Indoor Air Quality*, <https://www.osha.gov/indoor-air-quality> (last accessed 2/22/23).

<sup>3</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency, *Why Indoor Air Quality is Important to Schools*, (last updated December 5, 2022), <https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/why-indoor-air-quality-important-schools>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> United States Government Accountability Office, *School Districts Frequently Identified Multiple Building Systems Needing Updates or Replacement*, p. 8 (June 2020), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/710/707517.pdf>.