

Testimony for Maryland House Environment and Transportation Committee
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**House Bill 0900/Senate Bill 355: Occupational Safety and Health –
Public Buildings - Indoor Air Quality**

Hello, I am Dr. Kathleen McPhaul an Associate Research Professor at the University of Maryland School of Public Health. I am a registered nurse (RN) and have over 30 years' experience taking care of workers with health complaints, teaching occupational health, and conducting workplace research. I am very familiar with the health effects of poor indoor air, but more urgently I am most concerned about how difficult it is to obtain information about the air quality in buildings.

This bill reads like a home-owner's manual and includes all the things that we should already be doing such as annual HVAC assessment, air testing, maintenance, and monitoring of building ventilation. But we really need the section of the bill that calls for "employee input", "worker training", "employee health complaint log" and access to the annual inspection findings. The Bill requires the government to set building air quality standards which is something that many States, countries and building owners are also doing post-COVID.

By passing this bill Maryland will be part of a growing national movement that is being spearheaded by the White House and the EPA known as the Clean Air Challenge. The White House knows that safe buildings are a critical component of pandemic preparedness, and our buildings were not ready to not serve our economy, our school children, nor our workforce during COVID-19. Not even close. Please see the links below for these valuable resources. This issue is not going to go away.

Furthermore, as a health professional, I know there are dire human health effects of poor indoor air including cognitive impairment, respiratory and cardiovascular disease and, of course, airborne infectious diseases. But I have difficulty getting access to meaningful building information to help employees and myself make decisions about going into to certain buildings.

For example, as the University brought the students out of lock-down which I supported, I wanted to understand the status of the air inside my classroom. My building had undergone renovations to improve the ventilation which is a good thing and I want to believe it happened. I saw the contractors doing the work. But, as an indoor air and occupational health expert, I wanted to know more. How many air changes per hour? What is the CO2 level when the classroom is fully occupied? Is the air being filtered? By what type of filter? I believe that our classroom ventilation may have been upgraded, but I have no access to the information that me and my physician would like to make informed decisions about the risk of being in that classroom. No public sector employee has access to this information, but we really need it.

Finally, I will close by saying I built my own room air filter for my office and my classroom, and I carry my own CO2 monitor, to assess ventilation wherever I go. This is a little crazy, I should be able to get this information from the experts who are the building managers. Please be clear, this bill does not ask MOSH to inspect every building every year, but it requires the state to be a good “home owner” and do common sense things to take care of our buildings for the citizens and the employees and make the measurements available to the building occupants.

Clean Air Benefits Everyone:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/news-updates/2022/12/08/clean-indoor-air-benefits-everyone/>

Fact Sheet: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/news-updates/2022/12/08/fact-sheet-departments-and-agencies-commit-to-cleaner-indoor-air-across-the-nation/>

Air filter work- EPA, CDC, OSHA, ASHRAE and more agree

<https://cleanaircrew.org/air-filters-work/>

Readout of the White House Summit on Improving Indoor Air Quality:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/10/12/readout-of-the-white-house-summit-on-improving-indoor-air-quality/>

University of Maryland Public Health and Aerobiology Laboratory

<https://sph.umd.edu/research-impact/laboratories-projects-and-programs/public-health-aerobiology-laboratory-phab-lab>

Donald Milton, Professor

<https://sph.umd.edu/people/donald-milton>

Jelena Srebric, Professor

<https://enme.umd.edu/clark/faculty/597/Jelena-Srebric>

California Aerosol Transmissible Disease Standard

<https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5199.html>

After three years of covering covid, I built my own air filter

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2023/01/13/air-filter-diy-covid/>

IAQ Research-Practice in Action: The Corsi-Rosenthal Box Air Cleaner

<https://www.texairfilters.com/iaq-research-practice-in-action-the-corsi-rosenthal-box-air-cleaner/>