

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 355
Occupational Safety and Health – Public Buildings – Indoor Air Quality**

**Finance Committee
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**Christian Gobel
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 355. Senate Bill 355 is essential to ensure the health and safety of our students, public employees, and residents who visit and utilize public buildings in Maryland. This legislation would require the Commissioner of Labor and Industry, in consultation with the Secretary of Health, the Secretary of the Environment, and the Director of the Maryland Energy Administration, to promulgate a comprehensive indoor air quality standard for public buildings throughout the state of Maryland. To protect the health and safety of employees, the Commissioner will be required to establish evidence base standards for safe building operation and levels of contaminants and pollutants.

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).

MSEA believes it is critical to ensure the air quality in schools and public buildings is healthy and safe for students, employees, volunteers, and visitors. Senate Bill 355 enables a collaborative process for employees and their exclusive representatives by allowing their input in a public employer's annual assessment of building envelopes and enclosures, HVAC systems, and the maintenance and operation of HVAC systems. Additionally, the legislation will require a public employer to investigate and respond to employee health complaints that may be associated with building related illness and maintain a log of health complaints.



Moreover, the bill makes certain that public employers receive assistance and guidance by requiring the Commissioner to provide comprehensive guidance to all public employers on cost-effective solutions to bring public buildings into compliance with the indoor air quality standard. The Commissioner must also provide consultation services on indoor air quality through the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health Division to public employers and provide updated guidance as new ventilation and other building technologies that promote healthy indoor air quality become available.

Poor indoor air quality impacts everyone within a building. 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.”¹ 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 may all contribute to poor indoor air quality.²

Maryland has the opportunity to lead the nation by establishing safe and healthy indoor air quality standards. To date, only New Jersey and California have taken the proactive step of establishing indoor air quality standards.³ Senate Bill 355 utilizes a rational, evidenced-based approach to make certain Maryland’s public buildings provide healthy indoor air for all.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 355.

¹ 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).

² 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).

³ *Id.*