

March 9, 2020

Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Janet Inzitari, and I teach first grade at Toquam Elementary School in Stamford, Connecticut for the past 11 years. Thank you for reading my testimony today regarding Raised Bill HB 5431, an act improving indoor air-quality in public school classrooms.

My school building has known mold, air quality, and water intrusion issues. I have been a full time teacher at Toquam since September 2009. Unbeknownst to me, the building was already full of mold due to water intrusion issues. I had no previous underlying health issues, but that year, I had several instances of sinus infections, bronchitis, and eventually, trouble breathing and coughing fits. These later ended up being diagnosed as conditional asthma, exacerbated by severe dust and mold allergies. I had never been so sick before. I went to an allergist in the summer of 2010, and ended up beginning allergy shots, something that I kept up on until this past summer, when I had my daughter. With the allergy shots, my symptoms lightened, and I was able to come to work and only become sick 2-3 times per year. Sadly, this was an improvement; it used to be once or twice per month.

I had my daughter in July 2019, and was out of work on maternity leave through January 2, 2020. During this time, I had **no** allergy or asthma symptoms. I went off the allergy shots, and I was feeling wonderful.

I returned to work on January 2, 2020. By January 6, 2020, I already had cold and sinus symptoms. I went to four different doctor's appointments to try to clear up the cough trouble breathing, congestion, loss of voice, and sore throat. No antibiotics could touch it; I was sick for over a month, with no relief. Finally, I went to the allergy and asthma doctor. With aggressive treatment, I am feeling better and better. This doesn't come for free; I now have 2 inhalers, an oral steroid, and a harsh round of antibiotics that I need to take in order to scale down the inflammation and return to work. I would like to reiterate; I am on no less than four medications, just to come to work. This is not normal, and it is NOT okay. I should not be terrified of coming to work because of the effects on my health. I should not be scared that my work environment could hinder my ability to breathe.

My building has known issues, and we have asked that the district fix the issues or move us somewhere safe. Their response is that there is no law regulating the amount of mold in our building. They claim it is safe, although they acknowledge that those with prior medical conditions or with allergies or sensitivities to these allergens could possibly be affected. They KNOW we are potentially sick due to this building, but there is nothing in place to protect our health or, perhaps scarier and more important, the health of the hundreds of students whose parents entrust us with their care.

I chose this job because I love it. I come to school every day and I want to see my students; I want to teach them. I don't want to be forced to go out on medical leave. The only way to improve this is to make our buildings safe to work and learn in, and the only way to do that is to pass legislation that will mandate districts to monitor and report on

their air quality. We need consistent healthy temperatures in buildings, and HVAC systems that are up to code to provide those temperatures. We need legislation that will support the process of cleaning and fixing environmental issues as they arise, not years down the road, when we have already been exposed to the potential hazards.

In conclusion, I ask you to please consider passing HB5431, to allow our school buildings to function safely and comfortably for both teachers and children. We have enough to worry about during the school day; the health effects of our work environment should be the least of our worries.

Thank you for considering my testimony, and for your efforts to make our schools a safer place to come to each day.

Sincerely,

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