



February 2, 2022

Representative Robyn Porter
Co-Chair Labor Committee & Public Employees Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3802
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Representative Porter,

We are a coalition seeking that our schools have healthy and properly maintained heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems (HVAC) for the workers and children in our schools. We are a coalition of union members representing school employees, including educators, school staff, and nurses, as well licensed HVAC contractors, journeypersons, and registered apprentices who together want to ensure our school building conditions meet the highest standards for teaching and learning.

We respectfully request that the Labor Committee raise a bill providing:

1. School workplace temperature and humidity limits,
2. School construction bond funds for remediation and installation of modern HVAC systems,
3. Standards for inspection, maintenance, repair, and installation that ensure only the most qualified licensed HVAC contractors.

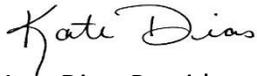
For your convenience and consideration, our coalition offers the enclosed legislation, which includes standards recently enacted in New Jersey. We have also included a summary of our suggested language at the end of this letter.

In our state, we have maximum temperatures for dog kennels and pet shops, protecting pets from temperatures that exceed 78 degrees. We have no minimum and maximum temperatures for school classrooms. Staff and children in our aging schools feel the impact of higher temperatures and humidity levels that result in moldy and excessively hot working and learning conditions. The result has been increasing Workers Compensation claims, lost school days due to closures, sick days taken by students, and conditions that constrain student learning.

Over the course of at least the last four years, we have seen a spike in the number of cases of educators and school staff being exposed to mold and other environmental toxins in their schools and classrooms. The incidents of exposure appear to be increasing as the 2019-2020 school year was by far the worst in terms of the numbers of school employees falling seriously ill due to just showing up for work. In Stamford alone, we counted at least 60 educators who were suffering, and some who continue to suffer, from the known mold exposures in their schools.

The need for updated HVAC systems in schools has never been greater. In Connecticut, parents are increasingly relying on schools for summer and extended learning. Yet at the same time, climate change presents hotter and more humid conditions that favor mold, and outdated HVAC systems increase exposure to the risks of airborne illness. As ever the case, the working conditions in schools are also the learning conditions affecting our children

Respectfully Yours,



Kate Dias, President
Connecticut Education Association



Jan Hochadel
President AFT



Ed Hawthorne, President
CT AFL-CIO



Michael Thomas Mauro, Sr., President
Air Balancing Service Co



Kimberly Glassman, Director
Foundation for Fair Contracting of Connecticut



Jody Barr, Executive Director
Council 4 AFSCME



Michael Rosario, Business Manager
United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters
Local 777 CT



Travis Woodward, President
CSEA SEIU Local 2001



Michael Thompson, Executive Director
Associated Sheet Metal & Roofing Contractors of
CT



Carl Chisem, President
Connecticut Employees Union Independent
and Municipal Employees Union
Independent



Kristen Abrahamson
Executive Vice President
Mechanical Contractors Association of CT

Section Summary: An Act Improving Indoor-Air Quality in Public School Classrooms

Sec. 1: Amends ConnOSHA definitions to include:

- o Acceptable Temperature and Humidity Ranges (68°-76°; 20%-60% humidity)
- o Indoor Air Quality as “the overall potential health factors within a school facility, including air quality, mold levels, and other potentially harmful toxins”
- o ASHRAE Industry HVAC Standards

Sec. 2: DOL monitoring program (w/SDE and OPM)

1. Assessment and Monitoring
 - i. Mandatory temperature and humidity ranges
 - ii. DOL routine school indoor-air quality assessment and ventilation monitoring program, updated every 3 years.
 - iii. Licensed standards for those performing assessment, testing, repairs, and issuing reports (Per CGS Title 20 Chapter 393 and certifications based on NJ law)
 - iv. Assessment standards (based on NJ Law)
 - v. Written reporting, including posting for public inspection
2. BOEs required to assess and report HVAC (July 1, 2024) and every 3 years
3. Requires corrective action
4. School closures when temperature cannot be maintained for more than 2 hours (with guarantee of no diminishment of pay for those scheduled on such days)
5. BOE HVAC compliance by June 30, 2026
6. Requires boards of education to participate in the EPA’s Air Quality Flag Program starting July 1, 2022.

Sec. 3: Extends school construction bond program to include HVAC

Sec. 4: Provides Safe harbor for School Districts – Considers them in compliance with HVAC requirements if they have submitted a school construction application (note: school must still close if temperature ranges exceeded).

Sec. 5: IAQ Complaint Procedures in schools

1. Starting January 1, 2022, requires school districts to designate a district-wide person for receiving all indoor-air quality complaints and require complaints to be reported to the board of education and bargaining units of affected employees.
2. Requires boards to investigate reports of potential health hazards and, upon confirmation of the presence of a hazard, to notify Conn-OSHA, and create and implement a remedial plan to be approved by DPH.
3. Prohibits employers from retaliating against employees who report indoor air quality concerns and provides whistleblower protection to such employees.

Sec. 6: Extends school construction bond program to include HVAC for Schools in the State Technical Career System