

Witness testimony for Bill 251

Dear Members of the Ohio House Health Committee,

Thank you for the privilege of your audience. My role here today as a witness is to impart to you the real health-related concerns from water damage to buildings and the resulting toxic mold colonization that can adversely affect the health of any and all occupants. Already the hazards of toxic mold have been established and addressed by the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control, and the Environmental Protection Agency. All of these esteemed agencies, which were established for the benefit of the common good of all citizens, have publications on their websites with pictures and large font, to educate the public about mold: how to prevent it, recognize it, and remediate it. Each also explains that one must assume the presence of toxic mold after water has been soaking any part of an indoor environment for over 24 hours. So, I am not imparting to you any new information in the general sense.

Therefore, I must be here to support you in understanding that many ailments can be due solely to toxic mold in a given patient: rashes, itching, asthma, sinus problems, bronchitis, pneumonia, lung hemorrhage, diarrhea, reflux, ulcers, liver disease, fatigue, brain fog, infertility, cancer, and dementia.

This list will help you understand the relevance of mold in indoor buildings and the enormous public cost. Remember that treating these secondary conditions will not remove mold in the home or office, so patients often accumulate further symptoms and side-effects from the medications used to dampen the effects of mold exposures.

For those who doubt this list, there are references on the National Institutes of Health research registry for all of these causal associations, and I can provide a list for those of you who request it.

Among medical doctors, there are few who seek out extra training in chronic environmental exposures. This is because a standard medical curriculum does not address consequences of mold toxicity, except for a brief reference to emergency management regarding the patient who has mistakenly consumed the white amanita mushroom. I work with a group of physicians who have had advanced training in the consequences of prolonged environmental exposures, and I have been treating patients with illness from mold exposure for over 10 years. These patients have had single or multiple symptoms, including rashes, itching, allergies, asthma, sinus problems of all kinds, recurrent bronchitis, fungal infections of the lungs, diarrhea, reflux, ulcers, liver disease, infertility, cancer, and yes, dementia. They often have “mystery” illnesses and have seen several specialists.

We have tests that show patients are exposed to mold, and we have fairly simple protocols to help them get better, and if the exposure is current, the treatment may involve remediation or a move. It would, of course, be better for these patients to have never had these problems to begin with. It is likely that for many of these patients a review of basic information about mold exposure and its adverse health consequences would go a long way to help avert these adverse health conditions. Some patients are homebound due to their digestive complaints. Many patients will go for years on asthma medication not realizing their house just needs to be remediated for mold. Patients have had to go on disability due to the fatigue and brain fog.

To date, I have treated the effects of mold exposure in attorneys, physicians, mechanics, firemen and women, policemen and women, state health workers, teachers, high school and college students, and I have treated entire families affected by mold exposure. Often within a given family, or a cohort of workers, each individual may express the effects of toxicity differently; some with GI upset, some with respiratory issues, some with fatigue or cognitive dysfunction; they may have no idea that they are all suffering from the same root ailment. Sometimes there is only one individual suffering, and others, in the same home or office, who do not experience symptoms, can be slow to sympathy. Sometimes patients will see several doctors first who do not recognize the symptoms as environmentally related.

There are many illnesses in medicine that we once thought were mysterious and have since come to light as nutritional deficiencies, genetic variation, infections, etc. The illnesses that mold toxins cause have also come to light over the past several decades, widely varied and entirely preventable.

I am hoping that this amendment to the Ohio Clean Air Act, namely House Bill 251, will help to educate and empower citizens of Ohio to avoid illness from mold, improve their quality of life, and reduce the overall healthcare costs for all Ohioans.