

Re: Support for HB 251, The Ohio Indoor Safe Air Act

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chairman Holmes, Ranking Member Russo and distinguished members of the Ohio House Health Committee

My name is Brandon Chappo, and I am writing in support of HB 251, The Ohio Indoor Safe Air Act.

As a former fully certified Air Traffic Control Specialist, requiring a Second-Class II airmen medical certificate, I know what it feels like to function in a complete state of health and well-being. This was essential to continuously perform my job duties at a high level in a position of public trust. I mention this to the Ohio House Health Committee to underscore what occurred in August of 2019 at 30 years old, when my health began to decline at breathtaking speed. Unbeknownst to me at the time, I was living in a multi-unit rental home in Cleveland, Ohio, which was rife with mold and water-damage. It would take nearly a year before I finally received the correct diagnosis. It has completely changed my life.

Symptoms began with the development of persistent headaches associated with bouts of dizziness throughout the day. I suffered daily from severe fatigue, abnormal sleep patterns and consistent insomnia. Brain fog, short-term memory loss, and other cognitive deficits set in soon thereafter as well. Having worked a career in aviation safety, the onset of the cognitive issues was quite unusual and alarming. I was in the prime of my life, and prior to this time, had led a full, active, and healthy lifestyle. It was clear that something was terribly wrong.

What ensued was an agonizing year of countless Doctors' visits, intrusive labs, imaging, and various therapies to ascertain the cause of my degrading health. To my dismay and confusion, the results continued to come back "normal" without any clear diagnosis. Professional goals and personal dreams I had worked so hard to attain were crumbling before my eyes. It was devastating.

Nearly a year after symptom onset, my luck changed when I saw Dr. Alice Prescott Sullivan at the Center for Functional Medicine at the Cleveland Clinic. Early within our initial consultation, Dr. Sullivan asked me to describe the indoor environment I had been living in at the time. It is important to note that of the countless medical professionals I had seen prior, Dr. Sullivan was the first physician to ask me this simple yet critical question. She quickly noted that my multi-system symptoms were aligned with chronic exposure to mold. Subsequent environmental testing confirmed her diagnosis.

I have connected with countless individuals and families within Ohio and across the country who have been devastated by the same physical, financial, and emotional effects from mold exposure in their homes, workplaces, and public buildings. I was alarmed to learn that Ohio had almost no information available to the public regarding this widespread health issue.

Determined to help others from suffering the same experience, I approached Representative Joe Miller and his staff concerning this overlooked, yet entirely preventable public health hazard. I am grateful to both Representative Miller and Leader Russo for answering the call to jointly sponsor this bill. The potential impact this legislation will have to properly educate and provide transparency to all Ohioans and their families cannot be overstated. Put simply, safe indoor air quality is a vital component to maintaining our health and well-being. HB 251 has an opportunity to be the cornerstone of this necessary public health initiative in our great state.

The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2009 rightly stated that “Healthy indoor air is recognized as a basic right.” I wholeheartedly agree. Recent estimates show that up to 50% of all U.S. homes have visible dampness and mold.¹ Individuals spend up to 90% of their time indoors.² Further, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) studies of human exposure to air pollutants indicate that of indoor air pollutants can be two to five times - and occasionally more than 100 times - higher than outdoor levels.³

Peer-reviewed published medical literature and various studies have shown that people exposed to mold and mycotoxins present with symptoms affecting multiple organs, including the lungs, musculoskeletal system, as well as the central and peripheral nervous system. The same literature shows that exposure to mycotoxins demonstrated positive associations with asthma, wheezing, and bronchitis, as well as fatigue, musculoskeletal pain, headaches, anxiety, mood, cognitive impairments, and depression.⁴

HB 251 is a good bill. It provides education to Ohioans on the potentially serious health effects from exposure to molds and water-damaged buildings. It also offers reasonable, common-sense disclosures to individuals and their families before deciding upon and settling into living arrangements. This education and transparency empower each of us to make the safest decisions for our health and well-being. It is my fervent belief that each of us deserve that opportunity.

It is my hope that this life-changing experience will help serve others by positively impacting this terrible social condition in a meaningful way. I truly believe that HB 251, if passed, will be viewed as a flagship for other states across this country by leading the way towards safer indoor air quality standards for all.

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chairman Holmes, Ranking Member and Joint Sponsor Russo, and distinguished members of the Ohio House Health Committee, on behalf of myself and all those affected by mold-related illnesses, I ask for your help and support for HB 251, The Ohio Indoor Safe Air Act. Thank you for your time, your consideration, and for your continued service to all Ohioans.

Sincerely,

Brandon Chappo
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University of Florida

References:

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3. Wallace, Lance A., et al. Total Exposure Assessment Methodology (TEAM) Study: Personal exposures, indoor-outdoor relationships, and breath levels of volatile organic compounds in New Jersey. *Environ. Int.* 1986, 12, 369-387.
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