

National Center for HEALTHY HOUSING

February 1, 2022

Chairman Scott Lipps, Vice Chair Adam Holmes, Ranking Member Allison Russo and members of the House Health Committee:

The National Center for Healthy Housing is writing in support of H.B. 251, The Ohio Indoor Safe Air Act.

The National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) is the preeminent national nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming lives by transforming housing. Since 1992, NCHH has served as a highly regarded and credible change agent, successfully integrating healthy housing advocacy, research, and capacity building under one roof to reduce health disparities nationwide.

We believe HB 251 is consistent with the science, is practical and will protect thousands of Ohio residents in the years to come. We recently reviewed the evidence on moisture and mold in housing and its impact on adverse health outcomes. For instance, nearly 24 million people in the United States have asthma. Asthma is the single most common chronic condition among children in the United States, with poor and minority children suffering a greater burden of the disease. The economic burden is also substantial. Annually, asthma accounts for two million emergency department visits, approximately half a million hospitalizations, almost 14 million days of lost school, and 10 million lost work days among employed adults. All of this adds up to approximately \$56 billion to \$63 billion annually in asthma-related costs.¹

Our group also published the evidence of the extent of water damage in homes, showing that at least 10% of homes have interior leaks and at least 12% have exterior leaks.² We also published a peer-reviewed paper, which stated in part:

“Epidemiologic and laboratory evidence links the presence of mold and moisture to poor health outcomes, such as upper respiratory tract symptoms, cough, wheeze, and other asthma symptoms. Although mold is associated with exacerbation of allergic rhinitis and allergic asthma in those people who are sensitized to mold, some components of mold can also elicit inflammation via nonallergic mechanisms. Fungal growth can result from excessive indoor moisture...Enough evidence exists to...eliminate moisture intrusion and leaks and removal of moldy items to reduce mold exposure and respiratory symptoms...[taking into account reports from the Institute of

¹ Jacobs DE and Reddy AL. The Housing Environment (Book Chapter) In: Environmental Public Health: The Practitioner's Guide ISBN 978-0-87553-293-6 Eds: Paul L. Knechtges, Gregory D. Kearney, Beth A. Resnick, APHA Press, August 2018. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/book/10.2105/9780875532943>

² State of the Nation's Healthy Housing. <http://nchharchive.org/Policy/2013StateofHealthyHousing.aspx>

Medicine report, local and international guidelines...A recent World Health Organization report states that remediation of dampness can reduce adverse health outcomes.”³

More recently, we reported:

“Fungi produce allergens, toxins, and irritants and thereby exacerbate asthma and allergies. They are also markers for damp homes, which are associated with respiratory disease. Up to 21 percent of asthma cases may be associated with dampness and mold, and a systematic review found that children exposed to mold were one and a half times more likely to develop asthma or wheeze. Damp, moldy, and cold indoor conditions may also be associated with anxiety and depression. Allergen from *Alternaria* (a type of fungus) is present in 99 percent of US homes, and 56 percent have levels associated with asthma symptoms.”⁴

Preventing water damage and mold exposure has multiple benefits, including:

- reduced asthma from exposure to mold allergens;
- reduced paint deterioration because the main cause of premature paint failure is water damage. Paint failure is associated with lead poisoning;
- reduced injuries due to trip and falls from structural rot caused by water damage; reduced exposure to pests (water is a key cause of pest intrusion);
- reduced exposure to pesticides

The evidence shows that mold-induced illnesses are preventable if residents and owners are properly informed and take the necessary steps to identify and prevent mold and water damage in the housing environment. We urge you to pass this bill and stand ready to provide further information.

Sincerely,



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³ Krieger J, Jacobs DE, Ashley PJ, Baeder A, Chew GL, Dearborn D, Hynes HP, Miller. Morley RL, Rabito F, Zeldin DC. Housing Interventions and Control of Asthma-Related Indoor Biologic Agents: A Review of the Evidence. J Public Health Management Practice, 2010, September (Suppl), S9–S18

⁴ Jacobs DE and Reddy A, Healthy Housing (Book Chapter) In: Making Places Healthy (2nd Edition). Ed: Andrew Dannenberg, Howard Frumkin. Island Press, Dec 8, 2021. In press.