



May 14, 2021

To: Rep. Scott Lipps, Chairman
OHIO HOUSE HEALTH COMMITTEE

From: John Pardee, President
PARDEE ENVIRONMENTAL

Re: Support for HB 251

Cc: Vice Chairman Holmes
Ranking Member Russo

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

My name is John Pardee and I am President of Pardee Environmental, an environmental consulting firm based in Lorain County Ohio that has proudly served thousands of clients in Ohio and surrounding states for over 30 years. I became certified as a professional mold inspector in 2005 and in the last 16 years I have inspected hundreds upon hundreds of homes, apartment buildings, office spaces, schools, government, and commercial buildings for mold growth; I've overseen scores of mold abatement projects. I have collected thousands of air, bulk and surface samples for mold. Based on my vast experience in the field of indoor mold, I come before you today in full support of HB 251. Please allow me to share with you an encapsulation of what I've learned during my career in this field and why I feel passage of this bill is so vital in protecting Ohio's citizens from mold exposure.

Mold is ubiquitous in the environment, both indoors and out. It's everywhere and every breath you all take contains some mold. There are over 100,000 different species of mold, ranging from simple allergens to incredibly toxic spores and mycotoxins. Our immune systems, generally speaking, have adapted to the normal levels and common species of mold found in the environment and most people don't suffer any ill effects from ambient airborne mold spores. Where mold exposure becomes a problem occurs in damp indoor environments that foster what we call "Mold amplification" that is trapped in the indoor envelope created by our insulated and sealed buildings such as homes, apartments and office buildings. So why do some buildings make people sick when others don't? The key difference between healthy and unhealthy building environments comes down to water, moisture and humidity. Mold needs three things to amplify; it needs warmth, a source of food and moisture. The buildings we live and work in are maintained at temperatures that both people and mold thrive in, and most buildings are built with materials that mold considers a good source of food including products made from wood, gypsum wallboards, paper, cardboard, porous fabrics and leathers. Of the three key components of mold amplification, there's only one that we can control to prevent mold growth and that is moisture and humidity.

And that, invariably, is what we find in buildings with mold amplification, we find a source or sources of water intrusion, moisture intrusion or consistently high humidity. Take, for example, a common occurrence in buildings; a broken water line, pipe leak or a backed-up drain. In these events, water flows onto the floor and ends up saturating everything the water flow encounters including the wood floor, carpeting, stored boxes, seeping into the wall cavities and so on. Most building owners will fix the source of the problem fairly quickly and then try to remove the water the best they can. Using shop vacs and

mops, they remove as much water as they can see and hang stuff out to dry if it's portable. But what most landlords and building owners don't realize is that the water intrusion penetrated way deeper than they could see and that residual moisture, if allowed to remain even for a short period of time, will begin to grow mold. I ask you to think about how long it takes for a wet towel left crumpled up on the floor or in a hamper to smell musty? Not long, right? What you are smelling is the beginning of mold growth so imagine what is going on in the wall cavity where you had a pipe burst or even just a leaky pipe with a nagging slow drip? One thing I've learned in my career is that people don't generally equate a musty smell with mold growth when in truth, that is the first indication we have that mold growth is occurring. If I walk into someone's basement, or even their front door, and smell that familiar musty smell, I know they have mold growing somewhere in their house, without question.

We are absolutely failing the public by not alerting them that it doesn't take a professional mold inspector like me to connect a musty smell with mold growth. Due to the potential toxic effects of mold in our homes and on our food, humans have developed a keen sense of smell when it comes to mold growth with various studies finding that most people can detect airborne mold odors as low as a few parts per million. Imagine the improved living conditions all over Ohio if we educated the general public about the dangers of improper responses to a water intrusion event and about what a musty odor might mean and how to maintain the humidity in buildings below 50% to stave off possible mold growth.

Most landlords and building owners are good folks trying to do right by their tenants and building occupants. And I've helped many of these same people identify problems and correct the situation. But as lawmakers you know that laws and rules are not written to address folks who do the right thing when nobody is looking. Laws are enacted to address the people who are either disinterested in doing the right thing or more concerned about the cost related to identifying and correcting a health hazard than they are about the health of the people effected by their choices. And in my career I've encountered both and I'm here today to tell you that way too many Ohioans are at the mercy of uneducated or unscrupulous landlords and building owners that makes passing this bill an imperative to protect the health of so many Ohioans.

Mold is NOT an equal opportunity offender. Mold, in general, effects women worse than men. I can't tell you how many times I've been called to inspect a building because a mom was concerned about her child's symptoms or where a woman or group of women in an office were symptomatic and raising concerns. Oftentimes the men involved acquiesced somewhat begrudgingly to the mold inspection and were dubious about the existence to a problem because they themselves were suffering no ill effects. What I've learned is that some folks, especially women who follow their instincts, are essentially the canaries in the coalmine and they often flag a mold growth problem before it got further out of hand.

But more importantly, mold effects kids and the elderly more than healthy adults and it is especially dangerous for people with compromised immune systems. Take for example, people in the middle of a cancer battle, who are in the process of receiving chemo and radiation. They are especially vulnerable to mold exposure due to their compromised and weakened immune systems. The same can be said for patients who suffer from Lupus, MS, Diabetes, HIV/AIDS and a host of other immunocompromising diseases. High levels of mold exposure to these patients can literally be a death sentence. In short, mold can render a healthy person sick and can send a sick person to an early grave. All of you good people on the House Health Committee have the power to mitigate so much needless suffering.

By passing HB 251, you can help educate the general public and building owners about the hazards of indoor mold exposure and how to recognize the signs and symptoms and who to reach out to for help. HB 251 will put in safeguards that will require that mold impacted buildings get identified and addressed before they are sold to an unsuspecting buyer. By passing HB 251, you will prevent thousands of Ohioans from being exposed to toxic indoor mold, saving countless number of people, especially women, children, the elderly and the sick from suffering the debilitating and sometimes life-threatening effects of mold exposure.

Those of you with more of an eye towards fiscal responsibility should also sign onto this bill knowing it will cut down on the cost to employers for lost sick time and lost productivity, the costs associated with doctor's visits, diagnostic tests and treatment for mold exposure as well as managing the care for these people who end up with a chronic illness as a result of mold exposure.

And lastly, for those of you who are guided by scripture, allow me to point out that the Bible is full of references to the hazards of mold in dwellings. Many important passages can be found in Leviticus 14. The guidance imparted in Leviticus 14 closely mirrors today's modern approach to mold identification and remediation. Here is a brief passage that illustrates this:

"the owner of the house must go and tell the priest, 'I have seen something that looks like mildew in my house. The priest is to order the house to be emptied before he goes in to examine the mildew, so that nothing in the house will be pronounced unclean. After this the priest is to go in and inspect the house. He is to examine the mildew on the walls, and if it has greenish or reddish depressions that appear to be deeper than the surface of the wall, the priest shall go out the doorway of the house and close it up for seven days. On the seventh day the priest shall return to inspect the house. If the mildew has spread on the walls, he is to order that the contaminated stones be torn out and thrown into an unclean place outside the town. He must have all the inside walls of the house scraped and the material that is scraped off dumped into an unclean place outside the town. Then they are to take other stones to replace these and take new clay and plaster the house.

We've all heard countless elected representatives stand in the well of the Ohio House and implore their colleagues to find guidance in scripture and to allow scripture to illuminate their pathway forward. So to the members of this committee who look to scripture as their lodestar, I ask you to recognize the nexus of science and scripture embodied in HB 251 and how it will help so many Ohioans, people in your flock for whom you've sworn an oath to protect, to live healthier, safer and happier lives. Passing HB 251 will protect the the most vulnerable amongst us; the sick, the poor, our women, our children and our elderly. Passing HB 251 is righteous, moral and good.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



John P. Pardee, President
Pardee Environmental

