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Testimony in Support of HB 251

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House Health Committee

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Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Minority Member Russo, and members of the House Health Committee, my name is Megan O'Dell, and I am an attorney at the Ohio Poverty Law Center. The Ohio Poverty Law Center advocates for evidence-based policies that protect and expand the rights of low-income Ohioans. We are a non-profit law firm working closely with Ohio's legal aid community, serving Ohioans who are living, working, and raising their families in poverty. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 251, to require the Director of Health to establish an indoor mold program.

Exposure to indoor mold can cause several health problems. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), exposure to mold can lead to wheezing, itchy eyes, or even fever and shortness of breath.¹ Underlying health conditions or a compromised immune system exacerbates the effects of mold exposure. For example, individuals with compromised immune systems are more likely to become susceptible to hypersensitivity pneumonitis when exposed to indoor mold.² Toxic mold exposure is also linked to long-term effects such as memory loss, insomnia, depression, anxiety, and trouble concentrating.³ Ohio's legal aid organizations have identified mold as a dangerous issue for Ohioans, but the lack of information and knowledge about the hazards of mold leads to a gap in services and a lack of remediation for Ohio's renters and homeowners.

To combat this issue, HB 251 requires the Department of Health to establish a mold information and awareness program to assist the public in understanding the hazards of indoor mold exposure. The bill requires anyone who sells, transfers, or rents commercial, industrial, or residential property and that knows or has reasonable cause to believe that mold is present to disclose that information. The Department of Health is also required to conduct studies on the adverse health effects of mold and to review technology for mold remediation every five years.

HB 251 is a good first step forward in addressing the hazards of exposure to indoor mold. To begin to combat the hazards of mold exposure, Ohioans must know they exist. No one asks to be subjected to the adverse health effects caused by toxic mold, and HB 251 will equip Ohioans with the tools they need to protect themselves from this hazard. We request the quick and favorable passage of HB 251.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/mold/faqs.htm>

² <https://ecosenvironmental.com/long-term-side-effects-mold-exposure/>

³ <https://ecosenvironmental.com/long-term-side-effects-mold-exposure/>