



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

Safe Military Housing Initiative (SMHI) would like to lend its support to the passage of HB 251. SMHI is a grassroots advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all military families are able to live in environments that are safe and healthy. In this work we have seen firsthand the devastating impacts that mold in the home can have on the health of individuals, especially children.

Because SMHI focuses on the needs of military families, we care about the quality of homes anywhere that military families reside. A large percentage of military affiliated families do not reside on military installations. Local communities are often the place that active duty, guard, reserve, and retired military families call home. As such, legislation like HB 251 would have a direct impact on the lives of those that serve our country. The importance of this cannot be overstated. Readiness is the watchword for the military, with one of the primary factors in readiness being the health and wellbeing of the family. Simply stated, a service member cannot perform well if they are preoccupied with worries about their family's health and wellbeing. By providing safer homes in local communities Ohio would have a direct impact on keeping our nation safe.

We agree with the committee on the importance of education for both tenants and landlords on mold prevention. This places both tenants and landlords on the same side in regards to the care of the home. In our advocacy work we have found that tenants and landlords often have the best intentions when it comes to proper maintenance. We have also found that when it comes to mold, moisture, remediation,

and prevention, the average level of understanding of proper procedure varies wildly. The result being, tenants and landlords often find themselves unnecessarily at odds on what to do to fix the situation. In the absence of a centralized authority providing accurate and up to date information and solutions, misinformation runs rampant increasing stress and fear. A centralized education campaign that evolves as our understanding of mold and its effects do would not only benefit the people of Ohio. We believe that it could serve as a blueprint for similar efforts at a federal level.

As a follow on to an educational campaign we would also recommend the development and implementation of standards for certification processes of inspectors, remediation technicians, and public health workers. This will provide landlords and tenants peace of mind when seeking advice on possible toxic mold in the home. This way money spent by landlords on services to address mold concerns would be well spent and families would be confident that any health concerns pertaining to mold would be adequately diagnosed and treated by both physicians and remediation.

Additionally, providing financial assistance for inspection and remediation for homeowners would help ease the financial burden that any new requirements might impose. Providing financial assistance would also increase compliance with any new regulations.

We encourage the passage of HB 251 as a first step in keeping Ohioans safe from the impacts of toxic mold. Not only would it have a positive impact on the quality of life for families in Ohio including military families, it could influence the passage of similar bills in other states as well as federally.