

Testimony of Jessica Karns

Executive Board Member of the Ohio Association of Radon Professionals

Before the Ohio House of Representatives Health Committee

March 5, 2025

Re: Addressing Radon Safety in Ohio Schools: A Call for Action and Support

Chairman Schmidt, Vice Chairman Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the Ohio House Health Committee,

Good morning, my name is Jessica Karns, and I am honored to stand before you today as a board member and Officer of the Ohio Association of Radon Professionals (OARP) and a licensed radon professional in Ohio for over 14 years. Currently, I hold radon licensure and certification in more than 45 states and have served as the Multi-Family Chairperson for the ANSI/AARST National Radon Measurement Standards Committee for the last 8 years.

I am here today to respectfully request your support for a budget amendment to HB96. As Mr. Cross mentioned earlier, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers, as confirmed by the U.S. Surgeon General, the EPA, the American Medical Association, and numerous other public health authorities.

A few data points to consider: The EPA's Radon Zone Map is a tool used by professionals, regulators and government agencies to gauge the risk of having elevated radon levels across the country. The map is separated by state and county. Of Ohio's 88 counties, 53 are designated as a zone 1 radon area. This means that statistically over 50% of the buildings in these counties will have dangerous high radon levels. The other 35 counties are designated a Zone 2. This steps the statistical risk down to 45% of the buildings in these counties will test high for radon gas. There are 0 counties in Ohio that are considered zone 3 or the zone with the lowest statistical risk of having elevated levels of radon gas.

In Ohio, over 2,559 new cases of Radon Induced Lung Cancer are diagnosed annually. According to the NIH Cancer Institute, the direct treatment costs in Ohio for each case amount to \$205,000, resulting in a staggering total of over \$524 million annually in preventable healthcare costs to the Ohio taxpayers.

Over the course of my career, I have personally tested thousands of residential and commercial spaces across the country, and I have witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of long-term radon exposure. The outcome is always the same: lung cancer and a prognosis of less than five years to live. These individuals are not statistics; they are mothers, fathers, children, grandparents, and friends. They are Ohio voters and taxpayers. And the most painful question I am asked time and time again is, "*Why didn't anyone tell me about this? This is so easy to fix.*" This is, without a doubt, the most heartbreaking part of my job.

I am here today to provide them with an answer. I am here to ensure that in the future, we won't have to hear that same question anymore.

The OARP is committed to raising awareness about the dangers of radon and advocating for legislation that protects Ohio's citizens. Today, I urge you to consider investing in the health and safety of our children and the dedicated staff who work in Ohio's schools. We are requesting a \$15 million allocation in grant funding to allow Ohio schools to test for radon and mitigate their risk. As a professional in this field, I can tell you that the primary barrier to radon testing and mitigation in many Ohio school districts is funding. By securing this investment, we can empower school districts to take the necessary steps to provide a safer, healthier learning environment for students and staff alike.

We ask for your support in adding this critical budget line item. Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to protecting the health of Ohio's citizens.

Sincerely,
Jessica Karns