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An Act Relative to Air Quality in Schools and Other Public Buildings

I testified at the hearing last year on Healthy Schools and Other Public Buildings and I wholeheartedly support the leadership of our elected officials in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for taking these steps to protect the health of those who must enter, work or learn in our public buildings.

I concentrated my testimony on the health aspects of mold exposure and the fact that some doctors are involved with special interests that are unduly influencing the science on mold illnesses and depriving sick people the medical attention they need to get well.

I submitted to the committee a complete set of subpoenaed documents regarding the background behind the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine's "Peer Review" of their Evidence Based Statement on Adverse Human Health Effects Associated with Molds in the Indoor Environment which erroneously concluded that mold doesn't harm human health. This medical society offers the guidelines for Occupational and Environmental medicine doctors in treating their patients. In this day and age of out-of-control health care costs for our state and its municipalities, having influential medical societies erroneously stating that mold doesn't cause health problems deprives individuals of healthy lives, puts no pressure on our state and its municipalities to correct building deficits to alleviate mold but it also costs us as taxpayers untold sums of money because these people continue to be sick, continue to go to the doctors and little is done to get them better.

Here are some updates since last year's hearing:

A short time after that we communicated our concerns and offered this documentation to you, we also offered them to the Wall Street Journal who believed that we had merit in our suspicions. After a 6 month investigation, the Journal published this past January a front page, top of the fold article exposing the conflicts of interest that surrounded the publishing of the ACOEM's Guidelines on mold illnesses. Of note, one doctor mentioned in the WSJ article and the key sponsor of the ACOEM Evidence Based Guidelines had been recruited for membership by ACOEM to write the paper. This former Deputy Surgeon General had his membership compted so he could submit the paper.

We also offered our information to elected officials on the Federal level. Especially in light of Katrina and Rita, we were very pleased that Senator Kennedy submitted to the GAO this past October a request for study of our government's efforts to "minimize and mitigate illnesses associated with human exposure to mold in housing and other indoor environments." He notes that there is growing evidence that otherwise healthy individuals who are exposed to mold experience persistent health problems. The request also seeks information on mold litigation, admissibility of medical evidence in court and the possible conflicts of interest of those who promulgate the standards accepted in court.

I also submit to you today a letter authored last year by Congressman John Conyers who supported last year's proposed legislation on the issue of health problems in schools and other public buildings. The only thing that has really changed is Congressman Conyers is no longer the ranking member but the Chair of the Judiciary Committee and that he recently hired a staff person whose concentration is environmental justice. We had the pleasure of meeting him when we visited with the congressman's office a few months ago during the Walter Reed Army Hospital hearings.

Government agencies refer the sick to two medical associations who have physicians knowledgeable about mold induced illnesses, the ACOEM and the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics. But the clinics are run by physicians who are also members of ACOEM and adhere mostly to the teachings of ACOEM. So, the sick are being referred by our government to those who deny mold causes serious illnesses. These are the same clinics that employers or insurers often times send patients to for independent medical exams that are then used against the sick as a weapon to deny liability for causing their illness. Because they know the doctors don't acknowledge mold causes serious illness. The sick are victimized all over again.

Example:

A Brief Guide to Mold in the Workplace

Mold Resources List

Business owners who are concerned about the cost of professional help can contact the OSHA Consultation Project Office in their state for free consultation service. Priority is given to businesses with fewer than 250 employees at a worksite, with further consideration given to the severity of the worksite problem. The Consultation Program can help the employer evaluate and prevent hazardous conditions in the workplace that can cause injuries and illnesses, including mold problems.

The following list of resources includes information developed and maintained by public and private organizations. However, OSHA does not control this information and cannot guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. Further, the inclusion of these resources is not intended to endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered, by the author of the reference or the organization operating the service identified by the reference.

American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM)
(847)818-1800

<http://eserver.acoem.org/physicianlocator/default.cfm>

Referrals to physicians who have experience with environmental exposures.

American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists, Inc. (ACGIH)
(513)742-2020

<http://www.acgih.org>

Occupational and environmental health and safety information.

American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA)
(703)849-8888

<http://www.aiha.org>

Information on industrial hygiene and indoor air quality issues including mold hazards and legal issues.

American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers, Inc. (ASHRAE)
(800)527-4723

<http://www.ashrae.org>

Information on engineering issues and indoor air quality.

Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics (AOEC)
(202)347-4976

<http://www.aoec.org>

Referrals to clinics with physicians, who have experience with environmental exposures, include exposure to mold; maintains a database of occupational and environmental cases.

Association of Specialists in Cleaning and Restoration (ASCR)

(800)272-7012 or (410)729-3603

<http://www.ascr.org/institutes>

Carpet and Upholstery Cleaning Institute, Mechanical Systems Hygiene Institute, National Institute of Disaster Restoration, National Institute Rug Cleaning, Water Loss Institute referrals to professionals.

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI)

(800)822-2762

<http://www.aaaai.org>

Physician referral directory, information on allergies and asthma.

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of American (AAFA)

(800) 7ASTHMA (800)727-8462

<http://www.aafa.org>

Information on allergies and asthma.

American Lung Association (ALA)

(800) LUNGUSA (800)586-4872

<http://www.lungusa.org>

Information on allergies and asthma.

Allergy and Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics (AANMA)

(800)878-4403 or (703)641-9595

<http://www.aanma.org>

Information on allergies and asthma.

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)

(301)496-5717

Information on allergies and asthma.

National Jewish Medical and Research Center

(800) 222LUNG (800)222-5864

<http://www.njc.org>

Information on allergies and asthma.

Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI)

(800) 882-8846

<http://www.carpet-rug.com>

Carpet maintenance, restoration guidelines for water-damaged carpet, other carpet-related issues.

What I want you to take away from my testimony today is an offer of sincere appreciation for your body addressing this critical health issue. I also want to ask that you look with a critical eye at any person or entity who tries to convince you that mold doesn't cause health problems. Look to who may be behind their statements because you may not appreciate who is unduly influencing our collective health.

There are tremendously dedicated doctors and other medical professionals out there who are trying to help those of us who have been made seriously ill due to environmental causes. Please do what you can to ensure that these committed professionals are not impeded by information they depend upon to take care of the sick.

Thank you,

Mary Mulvey Jacobson