

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-959

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING MOLD IN RESIDENTIAL HOUSING.

Vote Date: 3/3/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/22/2023

File No.: 79

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Health Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Residents of a large Section 8 housing complex under HUD oversight are experiencing significant challenges with unchecked and unsafe mold exposure in their homes. Initially this bill was to create an advisory council to evaluate and propose standards of evaluation and remediation to the Department of Public Health (DPH). **LCO 5183** changes the language and now requires DPH to evaluate data and guidance published by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the identification, assessment, remediation, and limiting of exposure of mold in residential housing. The bill also requires DPH to develop uniform standards identifying and assessing mold and mold remediation protocols. Additionally, DPH must develop guidelines to limit mold exposure and create uniform standards assessing health threats from mold exposure. DPH will publish the standards and guidelines and develop a public awareness campaign to aid in preventing mold in homes and the associated health risks.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Aundré Bumgardner, State Representative, Connecticut General Assembly

Rep. Bumgardner does not support this bill as written because it only establishes a uniform mold standard. The bill does not address the unsafe housing conditions many of his constituents suffer with due to unaddressed mold issues in their homes. It does not re-assign his impacted constituents to safe housing and assign mold control responsibilities to landlords.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Keith Hedrick, Mayor, City of Groton

Mayor Hedrick supports this bill. He is responsible for a sizeable mold remediation project in a large Section 8 housing complex under HUD oversight. Several different inspections were conducted by responsible parties. Each inspector utilized different testing processes to identify and assess mold. They also lacked uniform standards to make these determinations. Mayor Hedrick also shared that he supports this legislation because the federal regulations for mold inspection, identification and remediation processes are not being enforced in properties under HUD oversight. There are efforts by members of the congressional delegation in Connecticut to pass a mold standard bill that would include inspection, identification, and remediation standards at the federal level. However, Connecticut cannot wait and must act now to protect its residents.

John Burt, Town Manager, Town of Groton

John Burt supports this bill. His office shares responsibility of a sizeable mold remediation project in a large Section 8 housing complex with HUD oversight alongside the City of Groton. He wants to see action on critical mold regulations to protect the health of Connecticut residents. The number of conflicts about inspection, identification, and remediation standards between the responsible parties has significantly delayed enacting a full plan on mold remediation for the health impacted residents in his constituency. Town Manager Burt states it is the government's responsibility to ensure safe conditions for residents, including the more vulnerable residents utilizing Section 8 support.

Robbie Bradshaw, Director of Government Relations, Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC)

The IICRC is a certification and standard-setting body for the inspection, cleaning, and restoration industries and they support this legislation to establish a Mold Protection Advisory Council in the state of Connecticut. They want the council to include scientists, medical experts, and others with industry knowledge. They want the council members to possess real-world knowledge of understanding, assessing, and remediating mold. The IICRC also wants the council members to be familiar with accrediting standards and certifications, including the ANSI/IICRC S250 Standard for Professional Mold Remediation.

Sandra Feters, Displaced Resident of Branford Manor

Sandra Feters and her family are displaced residents of Branford Manor due to the toxic mold that has overrun her home leaving it unfit for human habitation. She and her family have been living in a motel for the past 8 months struggling with disabling and life-threatening health issues. Instead of being protected and supported, she is still paying rent to the property management company who continue to operate in an unethical and criminal fashion by exploiting the lack of mold standards, regulations, and legislation in the state.

The issues created by the mold have stolen the health, home, possessions, and future opportunities for her and her daughter. Now they are trapped in a life-or-death low-income housing environment with little to no hope of escaping a continued life of poverty.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Portia Bordelon, Town Councilor, Groton Town Council

Councilor Bordelon does not support this legislation to create an advisory council as it will not address the concerns of mold impacted residents, nor provide immediate relief. More accurately, it will impede the efforts of already suffering people to protect themselves from immediate and chronic health hazards in their homes.

The bill needs to be rewritten to prioritize clarity, responsibility, and accountability in all matters involving the mold hazard life cycle. It needs to empower and require regional health districts to take the most aggressive approach possible to address health hazards to include allergens, mold, or pests.

While there are efforts at the federal level to reform regulations needed to address updated mold legislation, New York City recently passed NYC Local Law 55. Both need to be used as a guideline along with the CT Department of Public Health's Guidelines for Mold Abatement and the Army Mold Investigation Logic Flowchart.

Janice Arscott

Janice Arscott does not support this bill as it is unnecessary. The language identifying mold is already established and we do not need a council to discuss the issue. The urgent need is for strong laws including measures of accountability and penalties for any violations. The suffering of the residents in Branford Manor needs the committee's attention now.

Others in Opposition

Michael Boucher
John Goodrich

Reported by: Kate Hamilton

Date: March 28, 2023