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BILL NUMBER: **H 5935**

VIEWPOINT: FOR

Dear House Education Committee,

As a parent and emergency medicine physician, **I want to urge you to pass** Representatives Ranglin-Vassell's bill relating to the "Health and Safety of Pupils".

Asthma is the leading cause of chronic school absenteeism, which often results in *difficulty learning to read and failure to graduate*. While kids eventually "grow out" of their asthma, the learning loss is irreparable. Tobacco smoke and outdoor air pollution are key culprits.

When kids attend schools near highways, like over 12,000 children in Providence do, they inhale particulate matter -- black carbon, and nitrogen dioxide from industrial waste -- and they do this for 1,200 hours per year during peak traffic hours. In Providence alone 24 schools are within 1,000 feet of the highway, affecting some 12,000 children.

In 2019, I met with officials at the Department of Health, communicated with experts at the Department of Environmental Management and the school department. What I learned is there is no clear path for families to request air quality audits. No agency was able to tell me what the quality of air was that our kids were breathing each school day. **Even though testing was performed in 2011 by academics at Brown University showing alarmingly high levels of pollutants in kids' classrooms (levels of nitrogen dioxide over 24 hours outside the school were seven times the EPA's yearly average for Providence and exceeded the NAAQS recommendations for air quality), not one agency had followed up on these alarming results.**

In their conclusions the Brown University researchers, Selix and Hastings, stated "Extensive repeated measurements across the city are necessary to fully quantify the problem. To address this problem seriously, long-term testing in various schools in the city over different seasons and weather conditions is suggested."

We now have an opportunity to do just that by passing this bill! It's my hope that kids like the ones I see in our state's ERs who attend public schools will have an opportunity to develop healthy lungs and brains, and graduate. I hope we'll show we're truly committed to our kids, their teachers, and a turnaround of the Providence Public Schools. Passing this bill could mean hundreds of kids with asthma and their parents could rest easy at night.