

April 14, 2021

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara  
Chairman  
House Committee on Education  
State House  
82 Smith St.  
Providence, RI 02903



**Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH**  
Director

**Department of Health**  
Three Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 711  
[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)

RE: H 5935 – RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

Dear Chairman McNamara:

I am writing in reference to H 5935, legislation which would direct the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) to establish an inspection and evaluation program and establish rules and regulations regarding air quality in elementary and secondary schools.

We applaud the intent of this legislation's goal because it advocates for a healthy environment for Rhode Island's school children. In general, RIDOH supports funding for schools to address air quality issues and other health concerns. Rhode Island's 2018 State bond and subsequent municipal bonds have made important progress toward addressing some of the most egregious issues in our State's schools. RIDOH fully supported the 2018 bond, which provided funding to repair schools and build modern facilities so that children in Rhode Island have healthy environments that allow for optimum learning.

Instead of the mandatory testing proposed in the legislation, we would suggest that Rhode Island continue to focus on addressing the deficiencies already identified that have not been fixed due to a lack of resources. It is likely that most, if not all, school districts are well aware of where the deficiencies in their facilities are and RIDOH has a good idea of which school districts have the biggest issues. More resources would allow for more schools to be fixed or replaced. RIDOH would prefer funding to directly address deficiencies in schools rather than spending scarce resources to pay for more testing to confirm problems for which we are already aware.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation. It is important to keep this issue at the front of people's minds. COVID-19 has brought a lot of attention to the ventilation deficiencies in many of our schools, and this is an ideal time to work to address those deficiencies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Alexander-Scott", followed by the word "for" written in a smaller, simpler script.

Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH  
Director of Health

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Education  
The Honorable Marcia Ranglin-Vassell  
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House