

April 27, 2026

State of Rhode Island General Assembly

House Finance Committee

State House, 82 Smith Street

Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Subject: Support for House Bill [H7582](#): Ensuring Clean Indoor Air in RI Schools

Dear Chairman Abney, First Vice Chair Slater, Second Vice Chair Marszalkowski, and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Huyen Nguyen, and I am a sophomore at Brown University studying Public Health with a strong interest in environmental health. I am writing in my personal capacity as a Providence resident in strong support of House Bill H7582. Last summer, I had the opportunity to intern at the Brown University Pandemic Center under Dr. Georgia Lagoudas, where I worked on indoor air quality policy research. Since then, I have continued this work through university initiatives focused on improving indoor air quality and by presenting on the urgency of clean indoor air at campus and academic conferences.

Through this work, I have studied trends in indoor air quality (IAQ) legislation across the United States and helped catalog more than 50 IAQ-related bills introduced across all 50 states between 2020 and 2025. This research examined how states are addressing pollutants such as particulate matter, mold, and other airborne contaminants through ventilation standards, filtration upgrades, and air quality monitoring in schools and public buildings.

The findings show a clear trend: momentum for clean indoor air policy is growing nationwide, but progress remains uneven. In the past five years, thirteen states have enacted legislation aimed at improving indoor air quality in schools and public facilities. Many of these laws focus on practical measures such as ventilation inspections, MERV-13 filtration, and monitoring systems to ensure HVAC systems are functioning properly. Rhode Island now has the opportunity to join this growing movement and prioritize healthier learning environments for students and educators.

Clean indoor air is both a public health and fiscal issue. Poor indoor air quality contributes to asthma, respiratory illness, absenteeism, and reduced cognitive performance in classrooms. Students with asthma and respiratory conditions miss more school days and may require emergency care. Teachers exposed to poor air quality often take more sick leave, increasing substitute staffing costs. Deferred HVAC maintenance, when left unaddressed until systems fail, can lead to significantly higher repair costs. Preventative action through filtration, inspections, and ventilation improvements is far more cost-effective than responding to avoidable health and infrastructure crises later.

Improving indoor air quality is also a matter of equity. Underserved communities often face a disproportionate burden of environmental health risks, including higher asthma rates and aging school infrastructure with outdated ventilation systems. Many students in these communities attend schools where poor ventilation directly impacts their health and ability to learn. Clean indoor air should be a basic condition for learning, not a privilege determined by a school's resources or zip code.

House Bill H7582 takes practical, evidence-based steps to address this issue by directing the Department of Health to establish recommended indoor air quality standards for schools, incorporating indoor air quality into ongoing school building inspections and assessments, and upgrading air filtration where feasible, including the use of higher-efficiency filters such as MERV-13. These are straightforward, cost-effective measures already being implemented successfully in other states.

House Bill H7582 represents an important opportunity for Rhode Island to protect student health, strengthen learning environments, and make long-term investments in safer school buildings. I respectfully urge this committee to support the passage of H7582 and prioritize clean indoor air for all Rhode Island students and educators.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Huyen Nguyen
Providence, RI