

Chris O'Brien

From: Joe Pickens <jpickens@Nemionline.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 28, 2026 11:20 AM
To: House Finance Committee; Rep. Abney, Marvin L.
Cc: Rep. Shekarchi, K Joseph; Sen. DiPalma, Louis P.; Rep. Cotter, Megan L.; advocacy@aafa.org
Subject: Testimony in Support of H.7582

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Dear Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Joe Pickens, and I am writing on behalf of the National Energy Management Institute (NEMI), a nonprofit based in Falls Church, Virginia. Our work sits at the intersection of energy efficiency and healthy indoor environments, and H.7582 is exactly the kind of legislation we support across the country.

We ask a lot of our schools. We expect them to educate, nurture, and protect children for six or more hours a day, but we can't meet that standard when half of Rhode Island's school buildings don't have functioning HVAC systems and most classrooms cycle through air at a fraction of the recommended rate. That's not a minor infrastructure gap — it's a daily health risk for kids and teachers alike.

The connection between air quality and learning isn't speculative. Children with asthma miss school at alarming rates. Poorly ventilated classrooms spread illness faster and leave students too sick — or too unfocused — to learn. These aren't problems we should accept as inevitable, and they aren't problems without solutions.

H.7582 takes practical, meaningful steps: setting clear air quality standards, raising filtration requirements, and establishing an inspection process. Rhode Island has the momentum — billions already committed to school construction — and now has the opportunity to make sure that investment includes the air students breathe every day.

NEMI urges this committee to pass H.7582.

Respectfully,

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