



March 10, 2026

The Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Chair – Senator Melissa A. Murray
Vice Chair – Senator Pamela J. Lauria
Secretary – Senator Lori Urso

RE: Support for Senate Bill 2873

Chairwomen Murray and Members of the Committee:

The American Lung Association urges you to support and advance S2873, a critical step toward ensuring that Rhode Island's schools provide healthy, safe, and equitable learning environments for all students and educators. Clean indoor air is fundamental to student health, academic performance, and attendance, yet too many Rhode Island schools continue to struggle with inadequate ventilation and poor indoor air quality.

The science is clear: cleaner indoor air supports student health, learning, and well-being. The American Lung Association's 2025 [State of the Air](#) report and 2025 Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America's [Asthma Capitals](#) report continues to highlight the importance of clean air for the health of our children. Decades of research show that poor indoor air quality in schools contributes to increased absenteeism, worsened asthma and respiratory conditions, and decreased educational performance and test scores. Proper ventilation can reduce the transmission of airborne illnesses by up to 80% and asthma is currently responsible for roughly one in six student absences. Additionally, improved ventilation can result in improved student performance. Rhode Island has made significant progress in upgrading school infrastructure, yet many schools still lack adequate ventilation and protection against airborne pollutants and infectious diseases. The average school building is over 50 years old, and roughly half of our schools don't have HVAC systems. Most schools achieve only 1 to 2 air changes per hour, far below the recommended 5.

We have a historic opportunity to prioritize clean indoor air in every school. The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education has approved more than \$5 billion in school construction projects, enabled by strong leadership from the Rhode Island legislature, Governor McKee, and the School Building Authority. Additionally, the "Attendance Matters RI" campaign, spearheaded by Governor McKee, is making progress in reducing chronic absenteeism, to which poor indoor air quality significantly contributes. This legislation will enhance and enable this work to continue now and for years to come.

Over a dozen states have recently passed legislation to advance cleaner indoor air in schools, and Rhode Island can follow suit. Connecticut conducts annual indoor air quality inspections and HVAC inspections every 5 years. California requires schools to install MERV 13 filters. Delaware directed its public health department to establish an indoor air quality monitoring program and set standards for schools. By adopting the policies outlined in S2873, Rhode Island would follow national best practices and join the growing number of states taking proactive steps to ensure safer, healthier air in schools to ensure safe, healthy indoor air in schools.

S2873 will help ensure Rhode Island's schools have clean indoor air by establishing state guidelines for indoor air quality, setting higher filtration standards, and inspecting indoor air quality in schools. We urge you to champion S2873 and help ensure its swift passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Fitzgerald". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "D" and "F".

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