



Climate Jobs Rhode Island  
1540 Pontiac Ave Suite A,  
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March 10, 2026

The Honorable Melissa A. Murray  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**Re: Senate Bill 2873 - Health and Safety of Pupils**

Dear Chair Murray and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. On behalf of Climate Jobs Rhode Island, I write in **strong support** of Senate Bill 2873, the Health and Safety of Pupils.

Climate Jobs Rhode Island (CJRI) is a coalition of more than thirty (30) environmental, labor and community organizations committed to working together to make Rhode Island a national leader in the development of a resilient 21st century economy through a Just Transition, one that centers our frontline communities and frontline workers.

Our members range from those who represent the skilled workers who install and maintain HVAC and ventilation systems in schools and public buildings, such as the RI Building and Construction Trades Council, to public health and community organizations like The Nature Conservancy, United Way of Rhode Island, and the Childhood Lead Action Project that advocate for healthier environments for Rhode Island families and children.

Rhode Island's school buildings are aging, with an [average of roughly 60 years](#), well above the national average. The [majority of schools](#) lack sufficient basic HVAC systems to provide clean air that children need to live and learn. Currently, ventilation systems are only required to be checked once after construction, allowing years to go by without routine air quality checks or assessments. As a result, students and educators are often exposed to poor indoor air quality caused by mold, inadequate filtration, particulate buildup, and emissions from indoor materials.

Improving indoor air quality is both a public health and educational priority. Research shows that better ventilation and air filtration can [reduce illness-related absenteeism by up to 17 percent](#) while also improving student performance. This is particularly important in Rhode Island, where childhood asthma rates are among the [highest in the nation](#) (25% above the average) and where

absenteeism has become a growing concern for school districts across the state. Conversely, schools with installed air filters saw [significant gains in students' performance](#).

This legislation offers a practical, cost-effective framework for improving indoor air quality in schools. Key provisions include establishing health based, voluntary indoor air quality guidelines through the Department of Health, upgrading HVAC system filters where feasible, and incorporating ventilation and air quality assessments into the School Building Authority's existing five-year facilities inspection process. Together, these steps would create a consistent statewide approach to monitoring and improving the air that students and educators breathe everyday.

Improving indoor air quality also represents an opportunity to invest in the skilled workforce needed to modernize Rhode Island's building infrastructure. Upgrading HVAC systems, installing advanced filtration, and maintaining ventilation equipment requires trained technicians and trades workers. These projects create ongoing work and workforce development pathways, so Rhode Island can support good-paying local jobs while improving the health and performance of students and educators.

Clean air should be considered a basic component of safe and healthy schools. Just as we expect access to clean drinking water and safe buildings, students and educators deserve classrooms with reliable ventilation and healthy air.

For all these reasons, CJRI urges the committee to support S2873 and help Rhode Island advance policies that create healthier learning environments while strengthening Rhode Island's building infrastructure and workforce.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,



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