

Comment Report

HF 2070

A bill for an act relating to an indoor mold information and public awareness program.(See HF 2399.)

Subcommittee Members: Andrews-CH, Kniff McCulla, Madison

Date: 01/23/2024

Time: 12:15 PM

Location: House Lounge

Name: Jennifer Leonhard

Comment: I was living just outside of Cedar Rapids when that town experienced the massive flood of 2008. I worked on the other side of Cedar Rapids at a consignment store and had to drive through town to get to work. The amount of mold in the air in the downtown area was oppressive, and I daily had to sort through and turn away consignments that had been affected by flood waters and mold. I had no way to escape exposure to mold and my health deteriorated significantly during that time. I had several miscarriages during the following years, and I ended up having to change jobs and towns in order to start to get my health to recover. It took me 10 years before I found helpful information about mold that was fact based (so many Healthcare providers simply do not understand the effects of mold). I now know much more about how mold affects our bodies, and my history with mold makes so much sense now. I wish I had resources and knowledge much sooner in life, so that I could have been more proactive with my health. Renters and home buyers need more availability to information on mold, including how it can affect health, as well as how to remediate mold issues that occur or find professionals who can safely remediate it. Iowans need educational resources on mold.

Name: Amanda Steinbach

Comment: I worked hard for my degree as a Physical Therapist; Ive enjoyed my career and most importantly being a mother. At the age of 34 I was considering disability because I couldnt hardly stand or walk. We couldnt figure out what was happening. From a marathon runner to a skeleton in a matter of months. We soon found out that our rental had hidden toxic mold. The Iowa Dept of Public Health website specifically tells people NOT to test their homes for mold because it is everywhere . Mold is everywhere outside but that does not mean it is healthy or without risk when inside closed environment. Would you tell a child that has anaphylaxis reaction to peanut butter that its not real? Every person is different and so is are they immune systems. There needs to be more guidance in Iowa on what is safe and how to handle mold. How many Iowans are being affected by poor indoor air quality? Studies show that 5075% of buildings have water damage. We spend 90% of our time breathing indoor air; the quality matters. We lost everything 5 years ago and our health has not been the same since.

Name: Rhea Wilson

Comment: We started an auction company in the late 1990's. Within a year, I had severe allergies, asthma, chronic rhinitis and ear infections, and brain fog. My chronic migraines went from barely tolerable to severely debilitating. Digging around in all the accumulations of peoples' lives, pulling out memorabilia that had been stored in damp corners and closets, finding spots of mildew and mold in crooks and crannies all contributed to playing havoc with my health. Hidden mold can destroy buildings, along with the lives of people living in them. People who have to sign leases and can't break them due to financial hardship are living in a time bomb. Landlords need

to be help accountable for mold issues on their properties. Laws need passed for good remediation and PROPERLY LICENSED remediators. Education for real estate salespeople/brokers, landlords, and other homeimprovement professionals is desperately needed.

Name: Christy Rouleau

Comment: I support this bill to provide better education to Iowans on the dangers and health implications of living with mold. We are experiencing endless chronic illnesses in our society and need to educate ourselves better on sources of these. One being mold and the affects of exposure on the human body.

Name: Robert Leonhard

Comment: I support this bill. There is a pervasive myth that mold isn't toxic. This is dangerous misinformation that causes real problems to be ignored a grow worse. As a homeowner, I would appreciate the ability to keep my family safe. Water damage happens easily and accurate information MUST be available for iowans to protect their families with the most up to date safe solutions.

Name: Allison Dykens

Comment: I am writing to express my support for HF 2070, a bill that seeks to establish an indoor mold information and public awareness program. This bill represents a critical step forward in addressing an oftenoverlooked public health issue that has profound implications for millions of Americans, including myself. I am a living testament to the detrimental impact of indoor mold exposure. For over two decades, I grappled with a myriad of debilitating symptoms, from severe autonomic dysfunction leading to the need for a pacemaker, to chronic pain, fatigue, and cognitive dysfunction. This condition not only impaired my health but also rendered me permanently disabled from work. The journey to my diagnosis was arduous and prolonged, spanning 26 years and countless trips across the country in search of answers. Astonishingly, it was a simple athome urine test that finally unveiled the root cause of my suffering mold exposure. My story is not unique. Countless individuals unknowingly suffer from similar symptoms, unaware that their living or working environments could be the source of their mounting health issues. HF 2070 is a beacon of hope in this regard. By raising awareness among medical professionals and the general public about the health risks associated with mold exposure, this bill can significantly reduce the time and suffering associated with misdiagnosis and mistreatment. Thank you for considering my perspective and for your commitment to the health and wellbeing of Iowans.

Name: Anthony Long

Comment: I was sick for 15 years before a specialist suggested checking my environment for indoor air problems and mold. Sure enough, black mold was present, which forced me to move after years of torture and mystery symptoms (anxiety, depression, GI distress, fatigue, brain fog, weakness, etc). I was diagnosed with several autoimmune conditions triggered by the mold and have been battling the past 5 years ever since. After making progress, I was exposed to another house with mold a few months ago and it led me down a path of remediation and restoration, which is very costly and extremely underregulated. The process of selecting a qualified company is incredibly frustrating with the state not requiring them to pass standards of credentialing and experience. My recent experience resulted in taking the plunge with a company who sounded credible all for it not to work. This left me pouring thousands of dollars into an unsuccessful attempt. As a business owner, philanthropist, dad and family man, it is difficult to function and contribute to our society and economy with debilitating symptoms. We need more regulation on remediation companies, resources to educate Iowans on mold and its hazardous effects, and stricter mold disclosures on real estate transactions. I am not alone here either as one in four people have a genetic susceptibility making it difficult to detox and clear mold from their body. I know dozens in the state of Iowa alone with very

similar journeys and experiences.

Name: Robert Nazario

Comment: I support this bill, Education on mold and it's affects on our health is needed. So many folks struggle with health issues and in many cases its origins can be traced back to mold in the home. Folks need information on how to combat mold and it's in the public interest for this bill to move forward.

Name: Liz L

Comment: Support this bill. It is difficult to find reliable updated information about mold, it's potential hazards and how to remove it or minimize risks. Putting all of that information and in easy to access place would help many Iowans

Name: Lisa Greenfield

Comment: Teachers and students are working and learning in schools that are making them sick, exacerbating asthma and allergy symptoms, and causing unnecessary compromise in attendance and overall wellness. Mold is a huge health concern for all of us and it can no longer be an ignored source of poor indoor air quality. Change must happen!

Name: Katie Cordray

Comment: I support this bill! I have had mold in my house and would have appreciated educational resources I can trust to remediate & help with the issue. Now, I have health issues that I am sure stem from mold as there is no causes and I just have to deal with them per white coat doctors. I know Iowans need this resource!

Name: Carolyn Morrison

Comment: I support this bill!

Name: Kristin Church

Comment: As a practitioner, I see many auto immune challenges, mysterious symptoms, and misdiagnosed illnesses. We are finding mold to be at the root of so many illnesses, as well as feeding other bacterias and pathogens within the body. The younger demographic is struggling with hormone regulation, digestive/GI challenges, immune system suppression, and brain fog. While theyre receiving many failed medications for these symptoms, at the root of many of these issues is mold. Mold exposure is being overlooked at home, in the schools, our work places, as well many social establishments. New & old establishments alike. Ive personally seen adults who suffer and struggle with eating and basic functioning because of small exposures that lead. To a family having to be temporarily separated. Jobs are being lost, families are being divided, and health is suffering when mold is ignored & left untreated. Society says, use bleach on the spot. That is not enough, nor is it a safe option. Education around mold exposure, and handling is severely lacking in our communities.

Name: Shannon White

Comment: I work with people who have chronic health issues that are often due to mold. On a daily basis we see it trigger autoimmune and other health issues. The isnt enough information or testing available to educate people about it. Mold is often overlooked and considered not a problem. If people understood the impact it could really make a difference.

Name: Bethany Niermeyer

Comment: I support this bill

Name: Brandon Chappo

Comment: Chairman Andrews, Rep. Kniff McCulla and Rep. Madison, Change the Air Foundation is writing in support of HF 2070, an act to create an indoor mold information and public awareness program through the Iowa Department of Health & Human Services. This simple change will do so much to impact the health and wellbeing of so many Iowans and their families. Poor indoor air quality and waterdamaged indoor environments not only impacts our health, but also causes significant physical, emotional, and financial hardship. Whats worse, water damage is not always a visible problem and can be hidden behind walls and in places not often frequented, such as attics and crawl spaces. Many individuals may be suffering from chronic health symptoms and have no idea that the culprit behind their degrading health rests within these hazardous indoor spaces. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (CDC NIOSH) estimates that the average American spends over 90% of their time indoors. The American Lung Association states that the average adult takes 20,000 breaths a day. The U.S. EPA's research indicates air pollutants can be 2 5 times even up to 100 times higher indoors than outdoor levels. These statistics paint an important picture: We spend more time indoors than ever breathing in air that is potentially bad for our health. Indoor air quality and the state of our indoor environments has an immense impact on our health and wellbeing. Mold and water damage is often a major, hidden driver behind illnesses that are entirely preventable with the right resources and information available to the public. Change the Air Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization helping families across the country breathe safe indoor air. The Foundation believes that every person has a right to know that their indoor environments may be affected by mold, bacteria, and other potentially harmful indoor pollutants. We believe that healthy and safe indoor air is a basic right. We also believe that HF 2070 is consistent with the science and current policy recommendations, is practical and will protect thousands of Iowa residents in the years to come. Mold related illnesses can be prevented if residents and owners are properly informed and take the necessary steps to identify and prevent mold and water damage in their housing environments. Change the Air Foundation believes that HF 2070, if passed, can be a cornerstone leading the way towards safer indoor air quality standards for all in Iowa. We urge you to pass this bill and stand ready to provide further information. In health and change, Brandon Chappo
Director of Public Policy
Change the Air Foundation



Urgent Need for Comprehensive Measures to Address Indoor Mold and Water-Damaged Buildings: A Change the Air Coalition Position Statement

Exposure to dampness, moisture and mold in buildings poses significant public health and economic risks to our population. Damp and water-damaged building exposure is linked to adverse health effects, primarily related to respiratory complications from mold spore reactions, such as allergic rhinitis, allergic bronchopulmonary aspergillosis, and treatment resistant asthma.

Water-damaged, moisture-damaged, and damp indoor environments not only impact our health, but also cause significant physical, emotional, and financial hardship to those exposed. What's worse, water damage is not always a visible problem and can be hidden behind walls and in places not often frequented, such as attics and crawl spaces. Many individuals who may be suffering from chronic health symptoms are unaware that the culprit behind their degrading health rests within these hazardous indoor spaces.

Mold is a preventable public health risk. Action is needed for increased protection of the public to prevent exposure to damp and moisture-damaged buildings.

The Change the Air Coalition strongly recommends the following legislative and policy approaches for State Legislatures and Congress:

- Public health awareness programs and information regarding mold and water damage through appropriate State and Federal agencies.
- Disclosures regarding mold and water damage for residential, commercial, and industrial real property.
- Certification requirements for mold assessors and remediators, similar to lead, asbestos and radon.
- Increased funding and appropriations for further research to the health and economic impacts from mold and water damage.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that the average American spends over 90% of their time indoors.¹ The U.S. EPA's research also indicates that air pollutants can be 2 - 5 times - even up to 100 times - higher indoors than outdoor levels.²

These statistics paint an important picture: We spend more time indoors than ever before breathing in air that can be unsafe for our health and well-being.

Beyond the personal suffering of any one individual, the economic cost to society attributable to dampness and mold is estimated to be \$3.7 billion for allergic rhinitis, \$1.9 billion for acute bronchitis, \$15.1 billion for asthma morbidity, and \$1.7 billion for asthma mortality.³ These are preventable costs.

Other non-respiratory symptoms are additionally reported in peer-reviewed published studies, likely related to inhalational exposure to microbial metabolites and mycotoxins. These involve neurological, immunosuppressive, and carcinogenic aspects. Mold mycotoxins have been linked to cancers⁴, birth defects, and dementia. Medical literature suggests that inhalational exposure to mycotoxins increases susceptibility to viral infections and viral related lung damage.

People exposed to a building with hidden mold infestation may remain symptomatic after being removed from the exposure, requiring treatment for recovery, further increasing the economic cost.

The prevalence of mold in buildings is widespread. In a major cross-sectional study conducted by the US Environmental Protection Agency of 100 randomly selected office buildings from across the country, and from which buildings with known air quality issues were excluded, sampling data showed that 85% of the buildings had past water-damage and 43 percent had current water leaks. The Occupational and Safety Health Administration estimates that over 25 percent of homes have had enough water damage to host toxigenic indoor molds.

Additionally, a better understanding of the presence of molds in the U.S. housing stock comes from a pair of studies conducted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – the American Healthy Homes Survey (AHHS) I and II, performed in 2007 and 2019 respectively - which evaluated randomly selected homes across the country for various health hazards, including lead, radon, asbestos, and mold.

Data from AHHS I and II indicates that the vast majority of our homes have significant water-damage, resulting in high levels of mold. Furthermore, reviewing the associated prevalence data, it was noted that 34 of the 36 mold species evaluated increased significantly in prevalence between AHHS I and II, indicating this serious problem is getting steadily worse.⁵

Our organizations believe that safe indoor air is a basic human right. Mold, dampness, excess moisture, and water damage pose an incredibly serious, but entirely preventable risk to public health. Additionally, the economic burden caused by these indoor environments are substantial, yet completely preventable as well. Comprehensive measures to address these issues are crucial for safeguarding the health and well-being of individuals and communities around the country, and we believe they should be treated with the same seriousness as lead, asbestos, and radon to ensure improved indoor air quality and healthier living environments.

We strongly urge policymakers, legislators, and public health entities to take action *now* to increase protections of the public from indoor damp and water-damaged buildings. Taking these measures will pave the way for improved indoor air quality, healthier living environments, and most importantly, the well-being of our communities.

Signed by:

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