Testimony of Lisa Siana

Before the

State General Assembly Education Committee

March 6, 2024

Re:

SB 287 – AAC Indoor Air Quality in Schools

HB 5347 – AAC Authorization of State Grant Commitments for School Building Projects and Revisions to the School Building Project Statutes

I am a speech-language pathologist at Oliver Ellsworth School in Windsor, CT. I have been an employee since the 2014-2015 school year. That was the last time I remember not having the loud, commercial-sized dehumidifiers throughout the hallways at the start of the school year. Humidity has been an issue in the building for at least that long. I was unaware of any mold issues until the past few school years.

Starting when we came back to school in August 2020 (the hybrid year), I began having some medical issues and I was going to the doctor for a chronic dry cough. I saw an ENT and a pulmonologist during this time. Neither doctor could definitively diagnose me with anything, and I ended up having allergy testing done. My results revealed that I had a mold sensitivity. During this time interval, I was prescribed Benzonotate, Prednisone, Doxycycline hyclate, Montelukast, and Levocitirizine. The latter 2 have been prescribed to me on refills for over a year. I never experienced any illness during the summer and did not take any medication during those months not in school. When the start of this 2023-2024 school year began, I proactively began taking Montelukast and Levocitirizine about a week or two before I returned to work, and I was able to manage my cough and severe nasal congestion that I had previously experienced. However, after being back in the building initially for about an hour, I could feel a tickle in my throat and started to have a headache.

Since having a dehumidifier in my classroom this school year, I have noticed a significant decrease in humidity and I have not been as sick as I was in the last few years. The sickness I felt had such an impact on me personally, that I delayed starting my family and trying to conceive my first baby because I didn’t want to get pregnant while taking steroids.

I am in full support of Senate Bill 287 and HB 5347 as clean air in schools should be a top priority for everyone involved in the school. Optimal learning conditions include a safe and healthy environment for all parties within a school building.

Thank you,

Lisa Siana