



Solutions for a  
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Director of Advocacy, Defend Our Health  
In SUPPORT of LD 1173 "An Act Directing the Bureau of General Services to Ensure Adequate  
Air Quality in All State-owned and State-leased Buildings"  
Before the Joint Committee on State and Local Government  
April 18, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and members of the Joint Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the director of advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health's mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. I am here to testify in support of LD 1173 "An Act Directing the Bureau of General Services to Ensure Adequate Air Quality in All State-owned and State-leased Buildings".

LD 1173 directs the Department of Administrative and Financial Services and the Bureau of General Services to ensure adequate air quality in buildings owned or leased by the State, including buildings in the State House complex. It directs the Departments to test and inspect those buildings for any indoor air quality issues and then directs them to report that information back to the legislature.

The State House and the buildings in the surrounding complex are public buildings which see hundreds, if not thousands, of visitors from all over the country every year, including school children. In addition, the dozens of staff members who support the important work of the legislature are even more exposed to indoor air quality issues due to the long hours spent doing the people's work. All of the visitors and workers in state-owned buildings deserve access to a safe environment, including air quality, when inside the buildings.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ranks indoor air quality as one of the top five environmental risks to public health. Americans spend about 90% of their time indoors where pollutant concentrations can be up to 2 to 5 times higher than they are outside<sup>1</sup>. Older individuals and those with preexisting respiratory and heart conditions are even more susceptible to the health impacts of indoor air quality issues. Those impacts can include anything from itchy eyes and headaches to respiratory disease and cancer.

While the majority of people that spend extended periods inside the State House and other state-owned buildings are adults, we do see numerous children in the complex. From the students that come to tour the building with their class, the student athletes that are honored, students that come to testify with their parents at various committee hearings, and the children that spend time here working as pages, children are frequently exposed to the air quality issues that are present in the buildings. Indoor air quality is important for children as children are particularly susceptible to air pollution due to the fact that lungs do not fully develop until

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<sup>1</sup> Environmental Protection Agency. (n.d.). *Indoor Air Quality*. United States Environmental Protection Agency. Retrieved April 17, 2023, from <https://www.epa.gov/report-environment/indoor-air-quality>



adulthood. Children breathe more air in proportion to their body weight, increasing the importance of breathing clean air. According to the American Lung Association, over 19,000 children in Maine have some form of childhood asthma<sup>2</sup>.

As someone who works to make sure that everyone has access to clean air, this issue is also personal for me. I have the trifecta of a congenital heart condition, severe asthma, and allergies, and indoor air quality issues are particularly harmful for me and others like me. I have experienced headaches and eye and nose irritation while working in the halls of the State House, and that is concerning. I shouldn't have to worry that walking into a building to do my job is impacting my health in a negative way.

Everyone has a right to breathe clean air both indoors and out. The state should be doing all that they can to make sure that the buildings that serve the people of Maine are actually safe for the people of Maine. LD 1173 would help protect the legislators, staff, and general public who access the state-owned buildings every day. Therefore, Defend urges you vote unanimously "ought to pass" LD 1173

Thank you for your time.

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<sup>2</sup> *Maine Air Quality Report Card*. Maine | State of the Air | American Lung Association. (n.d.). Retrieved April 9, 2023, from <https://www.lung.org/research/sota/city-rankings/states/maine>