



MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY

Every physician matters, each patient counts.

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.2131/S.1382
AN ACT TO IMPROVE OUTDOOR AND INDOOR AIR QUALITY FOR
COMMUNITIES BURDENED BY POLLUTION
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH
OCTOBER 5, 2023**

The MMS is a professional association of over 25,000 physicians, residents, and medical students across all clinical disciplines, organizations, and practice settings. The MMS is committed to advocating on behalf of patients for a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them to provide the best care possible. Over the years, the Society has increased its policymaking and advocacy on issues at the critical intersection of environmental justice and public health. We recognize the vital correlation of environmental justice and public health and the critical impact that environmental policy has on the health of the residents of the Commonwealth where communities of color and low-income communities are disproportionately harmed by environmental impacts. In particular, air pollution is known to correlate with numerous adverse health outcomes, including heart disease, stroke, asthma and COPD, and air pollution disproportionately affects environmental justice communities and communities of color.

Given the known impacts, we seek to support policies that will increase enforcement of stricter air quality standards, working towards improving ambient air quality to a maximum of the 25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ 24-hour standard in alignment with recommendations by the American Medical Association in order to promote and protect the health of vulnerable populations in Massachusetts. Additionally, we further recognize the association between gas stoves and asthma and the importance of EPA indoor air quality standards being enforced in primary and secondary schools. Finally, MMS policy acknowledges that social determinants of health, such as the disproportionate distribution of air pollution in underrepresented communities, play a key role in health outcomes and disparities. MMS supports policies aimed at improving social determinants of health for all people.

H.2131/S. 1382, *An Act to improve outdoor and indoor air quality for communities burdened by pollution*, would take positive steps towards addressing each of these important policy concerns. This legislation would require the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to install air monitors to detect pollutants, including black carbon and ultrafine particulate matter, in air pollution hotspots within environmental justice communities. This monitoring will establish a baseline of air pollution in these hotspots and set targets for reduction of pollution in these hotspots by 2035. An analysis of the inequitable distribution of exposure to motor vehicle exhaust in Massachusetts found that residents of color in Massachusetts are exposed to 26 - 36% more

pollution from vehicle emissions than white residents¹. Targeting air pollution hotspots in environmental justice communities with a data driven approach will drive meaningful reduction of air pollution and represent a step forward in health equity in Massachusetts.

H.2131/S.1382 takes important steps to improve indoor air quality requiring the installation of air filters in existing eligible buildings, such as schools, public housing and correctional facilities as well as mandating advanced HVAC filtration systems for newly built eligible buildings, including daycare facilities. Finally, the legislation upgrades state codes to improve mold enforcement, and prohibits the installation of gas stoves in newly built eligible buildings. Breathing polluted air is linked to a number of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Gas stoves in particular have been linked with a higher incidence of childhood asthma.² This legislation will improve indoor air quality for children and others, while reducing the inequitable impact of air pollution and taking a step towards greater health equity within Massachusetts.

For these reasons, we therefore ask the Committee to report House bill 2131 and Senate bill 1382 out favorably. Thank you very much for your consideration of these important issues. We appreciate the opportunity to offer these comments.

¹ <https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2019/06/Inequitable-Exposure-to-Vehicle-Pollution-MA.pdf>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9819315/>