Shaping Tomorrow's Global Built Environment Today

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The Honorable Melissa A. Murray
Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services
Rhode Island State Senate
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

Re: SB 2873, "Relating to Education – Health and Safety of Pupils"

Dear Chair Murray and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

I am writing on behalf of ASHRAE, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers, regarding Senate Bill 2873, "Relating to Education – Health and Safety of Pupils," currently before the Committee for consideration. ASHRAE, founded in 1894, is a global technical and professional society of more than 55,000 members, including nearly 100 in Rhode Island, that focuses on building systems, energy efficiency, indoor air quality, refrigeration, and sustainability. Through our research, standards writing, publishing, certification, and continuing education, ASHRAE shapes tomorrow's global built environment today.

Supporting the health and well-being of building occupants is the most important aspect of the indoor environment. We know from a wide body of scientific work that poor indoor air quality significantly and negatively affects student's learning and health, and that good indoor air quality creates better educational and health outcomes. We appreciate that this legislation aims to improve air quality in schools, which will benefit students, teachers, staff, and visitors to the facility.

ASHRAE supports that our consensus-based standards are referenced in Section 1(A)(6) of the bill, which would require the Rhode Island Department of Education to perform an inspection and evaluation of the indoor air quality within each school building, including a verification of the physical condition and operational performance of ventilation system components that is performed according to "professional engineering standards [that are] nationally recognized, science-based technical standards for the design, operation, maintenance, and performance of indoor spaces." We appreciate that the legislation lists ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 62.1, *Ventilation and Acceptable Indoor Air Quality*, ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 55, *Thermal Environmental Conditions for Human Occupancy*, and ASHRAE Standard 241, *Control of Infectious Aerosols*, as relevant standards that fit these requirements. Below are short summaries of these important standards.

- **ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 62.1-2025, *Ventilation and Acceptable Indoor Air Quality***, specifies minimum ventilation rates and other measures intended to provide indoor air quality that is acceptable to human occupants and minimizes adverse health effects due to poor indoor air quality. It defines the requirements for ventilation and air-cleaning system design, installation, commissioning, and operations and maintenance. It is intended for use in new buildings, as well as additions or changes to existing buildings.

- **ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 55-2023, *Thermal Environmental Conditions for Human Occupancy***, specifies the methods for determining acceptable thermal environmental conditions such as temperature and humidity. The most recent edition of this standard includes new addenda with a focus on the application of the standard in clear, enforceable language.

- **ASHRAE Standard 241-2023, *Control of Infectious Aerosols***, is a standard for buildings focused on airborne infection risk mitigation. It establishes minimum requirements for building owners, operators and professionals to improve IAQ by reducing the risk of airborne disease transmission by infectious aerosols. Standard 241 is meant to be applied in periods of elevated risk, for example the risk of transmission of pathogens like the SARS-COV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19. Under these conditions, buildings would operate in "Infection Risk Management Mode," and building operators would have the flexibility to choose between different equivalent clean air options based on what they determine is appropriate for that type of space, along with their specific energy use goals or cost restrictions. This flexibility makes Standard 241 a powerful tool for mitigating transmission risk that can be adapted for use in different types of buildings, in combination with Standard 62.1.

We appreciate your consideration of ASHRAE's comments regarding SB 2873, and the committee's work to improve the indoor air quality of Rhode Island schools. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me or have your staff contact GovAffairs@ashrae.org.

Sincerely,

Jeff Littleton
ASHRAE Executive Vice President