



Testimony of Laila A. Mandour, President  
Administrative and Residual Employees Union

In support of H.B. No. 6556

AN ACT CONCERNING SICK BUILDINGS

Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, I am Laila Mandour, President of the Administrative and Residual Employees Union, AFT Local 4200 and I am here in support of House Bill 6556, An Act Concerning Sick Buildings. We represent approximately 3000 state employees who are accountants, tax collectors, analysts and fiscal employees. We have over 500 members at 25 Sigourney Street in Hartford. That building is considered a sick building.

Our Vice President will discuss further the issue of sick building, but I would like to bring to your attention that A&R Employees union has approximately 100 people who suffer from upper respiratory illnesses and skin ailments related to mold, fungi, bacteria, dust, mold and other allergens in that building. That is not the only building that contains these silent stalkers. Not only do the illnesses take their obvious toll with physical symptoms, but these illnesses take their toll mentally. Many of our members are afraid to say they are sick for being retaliated against, or not believed or for being portrayed as malingerers. These silent stalkers cannot be seen and because not everyone is susceptible to their devastation sometimes these illnesses are blamed on other causes. Some of our members became very sick and were forced to retire in their

40s and 50s. Some of our members have died. Most of our members self-medicate, they minimize the impact of the illness, or they do not report their illnesses because they fear reprisal and they fear that they will be denied training and promotions.

Although A&R and the State have come to an agreement and a process on how to deal with these injured workers, our members are still isolated and made to feel apart from their agency. People must be treated with respect and dignity. House Bill 6556 is a beginning toward that end. I would ask you to support this bill. Thank you.