

MEMORANDUM

TO: All House Members

FROM: Representative Chelsa Wagner

SUBJECT: Introduction of Legislation – Requirement of Reporting Radon Test Results in School Buildings

In the near future, I intend to introduce legislation to address what is a potential health hazard to our children in their own schools: the presence of radon contamination.

As you may be aware, radon is a gas that is a leading cause of lung cancer. It is estimated that 40% of Pennsylvania homes contain elevated levels of radon. Our school buildings may also have high levels of radon contamination, in fact, some schools have tested to have radon levels as much as 8 times greater than that deemed dangerous by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Yet, the Commonwealth does not require school buildings to be tested for radon contamination.

Some school districts have taken mitigating measures to resolve dangerous levels of radon contamination in their school buildings. However, there is no current law requiring all school districts to do so. Furthermore, most school districts do not even test for radon. Out of the 95 school districts in Southwestern Pennsylvania, only 22 have performed radon testing in their buildings.

I believe parents deserve to know if their child's school has been tested for this harmful substance, and, if so, whether dangerous levels of radon have been found. My legislation would provide for notice by requiring a school district to contact the parent or guardian of each student in writing, beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, regarding radon testing in the school buildings. The notice must include whether or not testing has been conducted, and, if so, what the levels of radon contamination are.

While mandating radon testing in our school buildings would be ideal, I understand the budgetary constraints experienced by our schools. I believe this would be an effective alternative of informing parents of the potential risk and allowing them to alert concerns to local officials if needed, and a means for greater transparency regarding public health threats to our children.

If you would like to join me in co-sponsoring this legislation, please contact Jonathan Detrick at jdetrick@pahouse.net.