



## **MAKING INDOOR AIR SAFER FROM BIOLOGICAL THREATS (AND FOR EVERYDAY LIFE)**

### **Why does indoor air quality matter?**

Most of the air we breathe every day is indoor air, as we spend 90% of our time indoors.

Air inside buildings is almost entirely unregulated and is frequently unhealthy, containing harmful invisible contaminants. These contaminants can be pathogens that cause airborne diseases like flu, COVID, and common colds; allergens that trigger allergic or asthma symptoms in children and workers; wildfire smoke; and/or toxic aerosols like those released from the East Palestine train derailment.

The HVAC systems of most commercial buildings do not have the type of air filtration systems sufficient to remove biological contaminants from the air—this is particularly true for bacteria and viruses. As a result, the majority of people in high occupancy buildings are vulnerable to biological threats, both naturally occurring or deliberately caused.

### **The strong case for safer indoor air in publicly accessible buildings**

People are far more likely to become infected with a contagious disease indoors rather than outdoors.

Improving the quality of indoor air protects everyone in public buildings, especially those who are most vulnerable to infection, like older adults and people with chronic illnesses.

There is clear evidence that better indoor air also leads to more productivity for workers, better outcomes for students, and a decrease in expensive hospitalizations.

### **Congress can act to improve indoor air quality**

- Congress can work with the Department of Commerce to create standards for indoor air quality.
- Those standards can be used as benchmarks for tax incentives and grant programs for building owners to make improvements to indoor air quality.
- Adherence to effective standards would improve air quality, providing a higher level of protection against disease transmission within buildings.
- Such standards would also include routine benefits, such as fewer work absences and hospitalizations, and better worker and student productivity.