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Resolution 94

A RESOLUTION TO BE ENTITLED AN ACT TO PROVIDE FORMAL STUDENT GOVERNMENT SUPPORT TO EFFORTS TO PROMOTE AND IMPROVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNING BUT NOT LIMITED TO POE HALL AND OTHER PCB-CONTAMINATED BUILDINGS

Short Title: The Campus Environmental Health and Safety Act

Sponsors: Senator Taquan Dewberry (Corresponding), Senator Mary Ledford, Senator Brian Carss, Senator Katie Stennette

Secondary Sponsors: Senator Aleena Kollu, Senator Alyssa Price, Senator Mordecai Mengesteab, Senator Jodie Roberson

Signatories: Legislative Assistant Logan Lowery, Sustainability Co-Director Kairavi Garde, Assistant Director of Campus Services Nathan Auman, Campus Services Department Member William Lin, Director of Campus Services Adam Womble

Referred to: Student Affairs

First Reading:

Second Reading: February 5, 2025

WHEREAS, environmental testing in 2018 identified polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) on the exterior of Poe Hall at NC State University, with concentrations above the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) hazardous waste levels, signifying the first recorded detection of PCB contamination in Poe Hall; and

WHEREAS, subsequent environmental testing in 2023 found elevated levels of PCBs within the interior of Poe Hall, again exceeding EPA hazardous waste levels by up to 38 times, which led NC State to temporarily close Poe Hall in November 2023 for further assessment; and

WHEREAS, in August 2023, NC State initiated further testing in Poe Hall in response to an employee's concern about potential PCB, asbestos, and lead contamination, as reported by the university's Provost, Warwick Arden, and Vice-Chancellor, Charles Maimone; and

WHEREAS, on September 25, 2023, the North Carolina Department of Labor notified NC State that it had received an occupational safety complaint alleging that Poe Hall employees were unaware of asbestos-containing materials, lead-based paint, and possible PCBs, even amid ongoing renovations and asbestos abatement in the building; and

WHEREAS, on October 5, 2023, NC State contacted the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) regarding concerns about cancer diagnoses among individuals with significant exposure to Poe Hall, leading NCDHHS to

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offer an environmental walkthrough which NC State declined, opting instead to hire an independent consultant; and

WHEREAS, on October 11, 2023, NC State collected samples from Poe Hall for testing, targeting asbestos, mercury, and lead, with results reported later in October within acceptable limits, though these findings were not disclosed to the public until mid-December; and

WHEREAS, on October 18, 2023, surface material samples from Poe Hall were analyzed for PCBs by EMSL Analytical, revealing the presence of Aroclor 1262, a specific PCB mixture, at concentrations significantly above EPA removal thresholds for building materials; and

WHEREAS, between November 10 and November 16, 2023, further sample testing by TEKLAB confirmed elevated PCB levels in Poe Hall, prompting university administrators to restrict access, move classes online or to alternate locations, and communicate the temporary closure to faculty and students; and

WHEREAS, on November 21, 2023, NC State's Chancellor Randy Woodson officially informed the campus community of the closure of Poe Hall, indicating that the building would remain closed pending a comprehensive assessment of the contamination risks; and

WHEREAS, on November 29, 2023, Provost Arden and Vice-Chancellor Maimone confirmed that Poe Hall would remain closed for the upcoming spring semester due to ongoing environmental concerns, impacting students, faculty, and staff; and

WHEREAS, on December 7, 2023, NC State contracted with Geosyntec Consultants to conduct an in-depth assessment and testing of Poe Hall to better understand the PCB contamination; and

WHEREAS, on January 18, 2024, NC State's legal team met with representatives from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to discuss the investigation at Poe Hall, after which NIOSH initially closed its Health Hazard Evaluation (HHE) but left open the possibility for reopening based on new data; and

WHEREAS, on February 5, 2024, media reports indicated that NC State's general counsel had withdrawn the HHE request, though the university disputed this claim, asserting its continued commitment to work with NIOSH on the health concerns; and

WHEREAS, on February 8, 2024, NC State released preliminary findings from Geosyntec, showing that while PCB levels were generally below thresholds for school environments, some areas of Poe Hall continued to exceed acceptable limits, raising further safety concerns; and

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WHEREAS, on February 9, 2024, faculty from NC State's College of Education voted no confidence in Chancellor Woodson and Provost Arden in response to what was perceived as inadequate handling of the Poe Hall contamination crisis, representing an unprecedented call for accountability in university leadership; and

WHEREAS, on February 12, 2024, NC State formally requested that NIOSH reopen the Health Hazard Evaluation to ensure a thorough examination of the PCB contamination and its potential health impacts; and

WHEREAS, as of February 20, 2024, Chancellor Woodson announced that Poe Hall would likely remain closed through the end of the calendar year, underscoring the university's long-term concerns regarding the building's safety; and

WHEREAS, testing between 2018 and 2024 detected PCB contamination in at least 22 buildings on NC State's campus, including residential, educational, and research facilities such as Gold Hall, Metcalf Hall, DH Hill Library, and Nelson Hall, in addition to Poe Hall; and

WHEREAS, PCBs, synthetic chemicals banned in 1979, are classified as probable human carcinogens by the EPA and have been linked to various adverse health effects including cancer, immune system damage, reproductive and nervous system harm, and endocrine disruption, with significant health risks for individuals exposed through inhalation, ingestion, and dermal contact; and

WHEREAS, the discovery of PCBs in multiple campus buildings has resulted in heightened concerns among students, faculty, and staff, leading to calls for transparent, comprehensive investigations, remediation, and effective communication regarding health risks and mitigation measures; and

WHEREAS, over the course of the next year, action will likely be taken on Poe Hall, resulting in the internal reconstruction of the building to get rid of the contaminated materials; and,

WHEREAS, PCBs cannot simply be destroyed or disposed of by tearing down a building or the materials on which they are attached; and,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the North Carolina State University Student Government recognizes the university's attempt at maintaining consistent communication and updates surrounding Poe Hall and other buildings on campus with significantly high levels of reported contaminants; however, it recommends even more transparency and dedication to the transmission of consistent updates, and promotion of said updates, to the student body and the campus community; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina State University Student Government formally requests that the University continually find more ways to increase accessibility to the

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information made available regarding Poe Hall and other contaminated buildings on campus; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina State University Student Government further requests that North Carolina State University conduct additional testing on all campus buildings built prior to the year 1990 for Polychlorinated Biphenyls and other harmful contaminants including Asbestos, harmful chemicals in caulking, Volatile Organic Compounds, and other Persistent Organic Pollutants; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina State University Student Government also requests that extensive routine inspections and testing for hazardous materials such as asbestos, lead, mold, and PCBs be conducted on all campus dorms constructed prior to the year 1990; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this testing include the monitoring of air quality for pollutants and water testing for contaminants such as lead or bacteria; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina State University Student Government formally recommends that the university work to provide at minimum free Serum PCB screenings or testings for concerned students and members of the campus community who believe they have been affected by the contaminants in buildings which they have spent an extended period of time in; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina State University Student Government recommends that as the university proceeds with the renovation and internal reconstruction of Poe Hall, they compile, produce, and publicize a comprehensive plan for the proper and safe disposal of the PCB-contaminated materials; and be it further

RESOLVED, that communication regarding this resolution and the discussion of these recommendations shall occur between the Student Body President, the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Student Affairs, and the Student Government Director of the Executive Department on Campus Services; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the North Carolina State University Student Government requests that each of the aforementioned student leaders be kept informed about all developments regarding Poe Hall and other contaminated buildings on campus; and be it further

RESOLVED, that primary advocacy on behalf of this resolution shall occur through the aforementioned student leaders with the corresponding, primary, and secondary sponsors of this resolution serving as advisors to these leaders on this matter; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be sent to North Carolina State University Chancellor Dr. Randy Woodson, the North Carolina State University Board of Trustees, the North Carolina State University Staff and Faculty Senate Chairs and Chairs-Elect, the Deans of the NC State Colleges of Education and Humanities

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and Social Sciences, the President of the Graduate Student Association, Dr. Amy Orders, Vice Chancellor Doug Morton, Assistant Vice Chancellor Justine Hollingshead, and the Campus Community Alliance for Environmental Justice; and be it further

RESOLVED, this resolution shall be effective upon its enrollment.

SOURCES:

- <https://www.ncsu.edu/poe-hall-updates/>
- <https://www.wral.com/consumer/5onyourside/testing-pcbs-at-unc-system-schools-december-2024/>
- <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSddzKsyiREecCTXF003xPKYXpW6vvzxiziMgcPMq8phWcyewA/viewform>
- https://www.technicianonline.com/news/nc-state-found-pcbs-in-2018-testing-of-poe-hall-d-h-hill-jr-library/article_d09785d2-dcfe-11ee-9534-8f6e58cca055.html
- <https://www.wral.com/story/legal-action-planned-against-nc-state-over-pcbs-in-poe-hall/21724234/>
- <https://ncnewsline.com/2024/11/20/nc-state-students-demand-accountability-for-pcbs-found-on-campus/>
- <https://www.wral.com/story/3-4m-approved-for-poe-hall-remediation-reconstruction/21750614/>

