

The Price Our Children Pay for ARHA's Failures

Good morning. My name is Bianca Rivera.

On February 6, 2024, I reported the mold in my unit to ARHA. They came, looked at it, and told me it wasn't severe. Their advice? Grab some Clorox wipes and clean it myself. But it wasn't that simple. The mold spread. And I could see it was hurting my son.

I reached out to Alexandria Breathe, an organization that helps children with asthma. They didn't dismiss me. They came, saw what ARHA refused to see, and immediately gave Dominik an air purifier, mattress covers, and cleaning supplies. They pointed to the vent above our steps — caked with mold — and told me that alone was enough to justify relocation.

So I sent photos. I sent emails. I begged ARHA to move us. But nothing happened.

A year later, my son is still in that same mold-filled home. Last week, he was rushed to the hospital by ambulance because he couldn't breathe. I sat at his bedside, watching machines force air into his lungs, and I asked myself one question: *How many more children are going to suffer because of ARHA's negligence?*

And then on Tuesday, I got the answer no parent should ever have to receive. Bloodwork showed Dominik has dangerously high levels of mold and carcinogens in his body. His pediatrician immediately ordered testing for all my children and demanded my family be removed from that unit.

Yesterday, my worst fears deepened: my other son, Liam, has now tested positive too. Two of my children — poisoned by the very home that was supposed to keep them safe.

Councilmembers, ARHA is not just failing families. **ARHA is poisoning them.** This is not negligence. This is cruelty. This is slow violence. And if nothing changes, it will lead to death.

Dominik and Liam are here this morning. I want you to look at them. Because when you see my boys, I hope you remember every other child whose name you don't know, whose face you don't see — but who is breathing the same poison every single day.

My children's home is killing them. And if nothing changes, there will be more. So I ask you: ***How many more children are you willing to sacrifice before you act?***