

The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman
The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Ranking Member
House Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property, Artificial Intelligence, and the Internet
2142 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

January 10, 2026

RE: H.R. 5437

Dear Representatives Jordan and Raskin,

The Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics (AOEC) represents a network of more than 40 clinics in 24 US states, two Canadian provinces, and internationally. AOEC's mission is to facilitate the prevention and treatment of occupational and environmental illnesses and injuries through collaborative reporting, investigation, and provision of high-quality clinical services for people with occupational or environmental health problems. Our clinics evaluate and treat workers with silica-related diseases.

We oppose HR 5437, "Protection of Lawful Commerce in Stone Slab Products Act" for the following reasons. First, the bill states that stone slab "products are not inherently dangerous". This is false and a distortion of the facts. Artificial or engineered stone slabs contain a high concentration of very fine crystalline silica flour (more than 90%), a much higher content of crystalline silica than natural stone, such as granite (10-45%) or marble (< 5%).^{1,2} In addition, engineered stone contains polyester resin and various pigments. The combination of crystalline silica flour and other chemicals create a much greater hazard to the lungs of fabrication workers when they saw, grind, drill and polish the slabs to make countertops. When the dust is inhaled by fabrication workers, up to 40% of them will get silicosis – a chronic and incurable lung disease.

The only reason stone slabs exist is to sell the slabs to the fabricators who manufacture the countertops. To say that those who sell stone slabs do not have some responsibility for the hazardous exposure to silica that occurs during fabrication would be the same as saying that cigarette manufacturers do not have any responsibility for the lung disease and cancers that result from smoking the cigarettes they manufacture.

In 2012, the National Lung Transplant Program in Israel reported 25 cases of severe lung disease (silicosis) requiring lung transplants.³ All 25 cases were workers fabricating countertops from engineered stone. Since then, many cases of severe lung disease and other silica-related

diseases have been reported in the U.S. and around the world.^{4,5,6,7} The most recent case of severe, incurable silicosis in the U.S. was reported by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health in the Fall of 2025.⁸ Due to the significant increase in severe silica-related diseases and high risk of silicosis in engineered stone workers, Australia has banned engineered stone.⁹

In addition to severe, incurable lung disease, silica exposure can result in lung cancer, immune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, kidney disease, and serious infections, such as tuberculosis. Workers who develop these silica-related diseases suffer debilitating symptoms and require lifetime medical treatment. Many cannot work to support their families and may suffer early deaths due to the severity of their illnesses. Many workers do not file for workers' compensation insurance and lack other medical coverage. HR 5437 would prevent workers and their families from receiving needed compensation for silica-related illnesses.

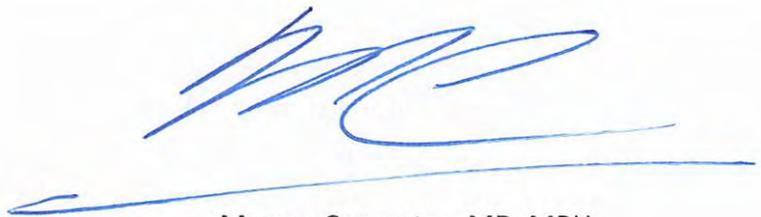
Ultimately, this bill suggests that manufacturers should bear no responsibility for considering the harmful effects of a product they are manufacturing. As scientists and healthcare professionals, we believe this sets a dangerous and immoral precedent. Ignoring known hazards of products have resulted in millions of lung cancer deaths from cigarette smoking and millions of childhood lead poisonings from leaded gasoline and leaded residential paint. The public must have the right to hold those businesses accountable and bring their case to a court of law.

We strongly urge you consider the workers and their families who have suffered and who will suffer from silica-related illnesses and reject this bill.

Sincerely,



Amber H Mitchell, DrPH, MPH, CPH
Executive Director



Marcus Cervantes, MD, MPH
President, Board of Directors

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