

March 7, 2017

HB 65 Proponent Testimony Luke Jacobs MPH, RS/REHS

Chairperson Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Minority Member Bishoff and members of House State and Local Government Committee, I am Luke Jacobs, Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Health Divisions of Columbus Public Health. I am here on behalf of Health Commissioner Dr. Teresa Long, our registered sanitarians, sanitarians in training, and the nearly 850,000 Columbus and Worthington residents we serve. CPH is an active member of both the Ohio Environmental Health Association and the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners, and we join these organizations in our support for HB65.

Sanitarians promote public health by conducting environmental health inspections and related activities for settings such as retail food establishments (restaurants) that are being discussed today. Their work includes determining compliance with local and state public health laws, preparing inspection reports that cite violations, documenting deficiencies, and recommending improvements. Our sanitarians hold, at minimum, a bachelor's degree with significant coursework in natural and/or environmental sciences and earn a certificate of registration as sanitarian, and participate in robust continuing education.

When our sanitarians were surveyed by Ohio Department of Agriculture under their most recent survey methodology in August / September 2015, we were concerned that the team of reviewers was headed by a Sanitarian In Training (SIT), not a team that has practiced environmental health long enough in Ohio to have earned their Registered Sanitarian (RS) certification. SITs are required by law to work under the guidance and oversight of an RS. It isn't appropriate to have a Sanitarian in Training (SIT) evaluate someone who has earned professional credentialing as a Registered Sanitarian (RS).

Following this inspection, the report that was provided was very subjective and did not assist us in ensuring that our sanitarians received constructive feedback that would protect our community's health and help us educate retailers. Sanitarian Demonstration of "Knowledge of the Code" is also known as Performance Standard #18. A local health department is to be marked out of compliance, when more than 50% of the sanitarians evaluated identified less than 80% of the violations noted by the state surveyor. Unfortunately, currently there is no standard way to calculate violations observed by the state surveyor, so this formula will vary widely depending on the individual reviewers. Our survey report noted that some sanitarians would benefit from certain training, but it does not indicate which or how many violations they missed during the field evaluations. The report also did not indicate how many violations the state surveyor found.



We firmly believe the goal of reviews should enhance our sanitarians ability to protect health, so we support the surveyor being required to produce a written inspection report concurrently with the sanitarian being evaluated, rather than compiling notes, reviewing the sanitarian's inspection report, and then determining at some later point if the sanitarian identified a sufficient number of violations. This will allow for constructive identification of violations and potential to engage in targeted professional trainings and development.

Provisions in this bill that address the need to verbally or document the violations at the time of the inspection, provide a comparison of violations immediately following the inspection, and for the Ohio Department of Health and Ohio Department of Agriculture to jointly develop a report that will identify the most common violations will all lead to more constructive evaluations. As it stands without this legislation, our sanitarians, and in turn, local business owners, are being subjected to redundant violations without the information needed to address them.

As such, we encourage your full support for a speedy passage of HB 65. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

If you have questions after today's hearing, please contact our Director of Public Health Policy at kahykes@columbus.gov, 614- 645-2097 (office) or 614-282-3116 (cell). Thank you for your time and attention to this important health issue.