

OMHC HB 49

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this committee.

My name is James Demitrus, I've owned and lived in a manufactured home since 2002. Currently, I am in my sixth year on the HUD Manufactured Housing Consensus Committee, we advise the Secretary of HUD on technical issues. I am a member of the Association of Manufactured Home Residents of Ohio, we are an advocate for manufactured home owners. In 2006, Governor Taft appointed me to the Ohio manufactured Home Commission, serving for nine years.

I want to address the value of the OMHC to the manufactured home resident through its 100% inspection and the Dispute Resolution programs. The Commission has been successful because it works with business, helps residents, has an active program to train installers and monitors installation inspections. The annual park licensing inspection program benefits both community owners and residents. On average, the Commission receives, and addresses, about a thousand complaints from residents annually. Before the Commission, there were several hundred complaints, about problems with the new homes and installations. Their Dispute Resolution Program has reduced that to just one in the past three years.

The installation standards are the product of accepted engineering practice and practical Ohio installer experience. The manufactured house of today requires a foundation designed and constructed based on site conditions and the home sizes. The home site must be graded and the soil tested to insure it can support the house. Piers should be built and positioned correctly, along with the tie down straps, placed per the manufacturer's instructions. The pier supports must be adequate and protected against frost heave. Finally, skirting should completely surround the home acting as an wind, debris and animal barrier. It is important that each element of the foundation be used and used correctly.

This was not the universal standard for manufactured homes before the Commission's existence, in July 2007. Too many homes in the past, lack one or all of the elements of a safe and stable installation. One must view the problems with manufactured housing to appreciate the progress made by the Commission.

Two problems are common, the frequency of damaged and missing skirting and the standing water around and under the homes from poor grading of the home's lot. Both cause damage to the foundation and raise health issues with the occupants. Many homes were installed without tie down straps, some claim the weight of the house will keep it on the foundation. Not so, high winds can, and have been known, to push the house off the foundation. Houses with tie down straps don't blow over in a high wind. Skirting also helps stabilize the house.

It's a common belief that mobile, and even manufactured, homes should be re-leveled every five years. Certainly a recognition of the inadequacy of foundation construction in the past. Some problems come from trying to overcome building on soils with low weight bearing capacity and the under lying water table. This is why the Commissions has carefully written foundation rules to help installers, especially with difficult building sites.

During the last ten years, other State agencies have transferred their manufactured housing responsibilities to the Commission, licensing home salespeople and annual park inspections. It has proven to be a very effective and efficient way of governing manufactured housing.

I've been appointed to both the HUD Consensus Committee and the Ohio Manufactured Homes Commission, to represent manufactured home residents, as an advocate for their issues. I support OMHC because of the positive way it supports both business and residents.

James Demitrus