



Testimony before the  
Health and Medicaid Subcommittee  
of the Senate Finance Committee  
Amended Substitute House Bill 49  
May 11, 2017

Chairman Hackett and members of the Health and Medicaid Subcommittee, my name is Jim Adams, Health Commissioner of the City of Canton. I have been a Registered Sanitarian in Ohio since 1951. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I am here on behalf of the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners (AOHC) in opposition to the changes proposed by Amended Substitute House Bill 49 to ORC Section 4736, that would eliminate the State Board of Sanitarian Registration (RS Board) and transferring that responsibility to Director of Health at the Ohio Department of Health (ODH).

This statute defines environmental health science as the aspect of public health science that includes specialized knowledge in air quality, food quality and protection, hazardous and toxic substances, consumer product safety, housing, institutional health and safety, community noise control, radiation protection, recreational facilities, solid and liquid waste management, vector control, drinking water quality, milk sanitation, and rabies control. AOHC strongly believes that the responsibility for public health protection should reside in properly educated professionals with specialized expertise, as defined by a board of experts authorized by the state legislature, NOT an individual agency director, that changes frequently and oftentimes has no expertise in the field of environmental science.

The statute goes on to define the practice of environmental health to mean consultation, instruction, investigation, inspection, or evaluation by an employee of a city health district, a general health district, the environmental protection agency, the department of health, or the department of agriculture requiring **specialized knowledge, training, and experience in the field of environmental health science**, with the primary purpose of improving or conducting administration or enforcement of several sections of the Ohio Revised Code. AOHC believes

that an independent body, separate from any state agency that may employ individuals to conduct the enforcement activities or delegate its authority for these enforcement functions, should be in charge of setting the practice standards for the professional that is to conduct the enforcement activities. Having ODH regulate both the environmental health programs **and** the individuals who are to enforce the requirements of those same programs is a conflict of interest and will lead to diminishing professional standards of practice.

We understand that the RS board runs on a very lean budget, approximately \$300,000 per year, while assuring testing and initial licensure, license renewal, approving educational courses, discipline, and other necessary board actions for approximately 1,400 Registered Sanitarians and Sanitarians-In-Training statewide. AOHC believes this modest investment is worth it to assure that Ohio's citizens are served by properly trained and regulated professionals in the field of environmental science.

The responsibility for protecting our communities from environmental hazards and preventing the spread of communicable disease is a sacred trust between the community and the Sanitarian. Registered Sanitarians and Sanitarians-In-Training provide this essential service to our communities following the highest personal and professional standards of education and professional conduct. It is of the highest interest of the State to ensure that individuals that practice environmental health do so following strict practice guidelines. An independent licensing board (the RS Board) provides this key oversight so that the health of the public is protected and is insulated from potential conflicts of interest.

We urge you to remove this proposal and keep the RS Board as a separate licensing board.

Thank you for your time and interest in this critical issue.