



# OEHA

OHIO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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**HB 33 Interested Party Testimony  
Presented by Sarah Burkholder, President  
Ohio Environmental Health Association  
Senate Health Committee  
Chairman Steve Huffman  
May 10, 2023**

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for letting me testify today as an interested party on House Bill 33 (HB 33), Ohio's biennial operating budget. My name is Sarah Burkholder, and I am the President of the Ohio Environmental Health Association (OEHA). Our Association represents nearly 600 Environmental Health Specialists (EHS)—commonly called health inspectors—and other environmental health industry partners and practitioners in Ohio. The role of EHS' include implementing Ohio's environmental health laws and rules by working with industry and the public to ensure the safety of the food we eat at restaurants and grocery stores, to water quality of swimming pools, sewage and septic issues, and other environmental health issues for the health and safety of Ohioans. I am here today representing OEHA to share concerns with some of the proposed language related to the Environmental Health Specialist profession in the As Introduced version of the budget, and speak to some of the changes we requested in the As Passed by the House version.

In the As Introduced version, OEHA reviewed the language impacting our profession which concerned our Association including **(1)** a provision that removed the National Environmental Health Association exam for EHS registration and replaced it with Ohio Department of Health (ODH) authority for the unnecessary development of a new licensing exam (3776.06); **(2)** elimination of a requirement that ODH provide EHS' with a list of approved continuing education courses (3776.07 (D)); **(3)** the removal of license fees from the Ohio Revised Code to place it within ODH rulemaking authority (3776.08); and, **(4)** licensing reciprocity for individuals from other states (3776.10). While there are many states with licensure requirements similar to Ohio and require science education courses, college degree, passing NEHA or state based exams, etc., there are several states that do not have any requirements for the EHS profession at all. I'll break down each item with more detail as well as our current position.

- 1) For over twenty years Ohio has exclusively used the National Environmental Health Association's (NEHA) recognized licensing exam for our profession because of its comprehensive nature. The exam is used to evaluate potential Environmental Health Specialist professionals and is a national benchmark for states that require an exam for licensure. We discussed the language in HB 33 As Introduced with ODH and they indicated to us it is not their intent to implement a state based exam, but the language in the bill certainly granted ODH the authority to do so while simultaneously eliminating the NEHA exam from the ORC. The possible introduction and development of a new exam is unnecessary and duplicative. The NEHA exam and training materials that accompany it are second to none and we believe there is no reason for this language to change. **HB 33 As Passed by the House 3776.06 restored the NEHA exam to current law which OEHA supports.**
- 2) We are concerned about the As Introduced proposal to eliminate a provision in current law requiring ODH to annually provide a list of approved continuing education courses to all Environmental Health Specialists. We believe it is important for ODH to ensure there is a resource available to ensure our profession is aware of approved continuing education courses which currently is required by statute. We find no reason to

eliminate this requirement. **HB 33 As Passed by the House 3776.07 (D) restored this requirement to current law which OEHA supports.**

- 3) OEHA is concerned with the removal of licensing fees for the EHS profession from the Ohio Revised Code and placing it into the Ohio Administrative Code into ODH rulemaking authority. We are concerned moving this fee from statute to rule will lead to future fee increases. We believe the current fees are fair and should remain in statute where the General Assembly maintains their authority and determines if future fee changes are warranted. **HB 33 As Passed by the House 3776.08 restored EHS fees into the ORC at their current levels which OEHA supports.**
  
- 4) Our last item concerns licensure reciprocity and requires some explanation between the As Introduced, As Passed by the House, and where OEHA is now. OEHA was concerned when initially seeing the language proposed in 3776.10 which we interpreted to require mandatory licensure reciprocity to practice in the EHS profession from other states without ensuring if the requirements of their previous state for education and training are similar to Ohio. Ohio has been a model for best practices tied to the environmental health profession since before 1960, and OEHA is often contacted by individuals from other states for advice on how to do things right. Unfortunately, every state is different and there are not uniform requirements for the EHS profession. Some states do not require science education courses, a college degree, passing NEHA or state based exams or any requirements for the EHS profession at all. OEHA was concerned that Ohio could potentially be licensing individuals from states without any requirements automatically, so we asked the House to remove this language in 3776.10 and return to current law which was approved in the As Passed by the House version. Through more discussions we have learned the language proposed in HB 33 is related to SB 131, the occupational license and certification legislation from last General Assembly which was sponsored by Senator Kristina Roegner and Senator Rob McColley. OEHA has contacted both Senators and now better understands that SB 131 provides a process to allow licensure of individuals with adequate work experience, but also includes provisions giving licensing authorities such as ODH discretion on implementing licensure reciprocity which may include requiring an applicant to pass an examination. **At this time OEHA is seeking to better understand the process ODH plans to implement for licensure reciprocity for the EHS profession.**

Chairman Huffman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today as an interested party on HB 33. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.