



OEHA

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HB 134 Interested Party Testimony
Presented by Scott Whittaker, Food Technical Committee Chairman
Ohio Environmental Health Association
House Agriculture Committee
Chairman Roy Klopfenstein
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Chairman Klopfenstein, Vice Chairman Newman, Ranking Member Miller and members of the House Agriculture Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an interested party on House Bill 134 introduced by Rep. Gross and Rep. Humphrey. My name is Scott Whittaker, and I serve as the Food Technical Committee Chairman of the Ohio Environmental Health Association. I am here today on behalf of OEHA representing our organization's nearly 600 Registered Environmental Health Specialists and environmental health professionals across our state.

First, we want to thank Representatives Gross and Humphrey for their responsiveness and willingness to work collaboratively with OEHA to address a variety of food safety concerns in home kitchens our organization had with the introduced version of the legislation. Through our discussions, the sponsors have made significant changes in their updates to the legislation which include some foundational public health protections. Their willingness to incorporate our recommendations has resulted in a stronger, safer framework for Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations which balances opportunity for entrepreneurs while providing safeguards for consumers.

As public health professionals, OEHA still maintains that operating a commercial food service out of a residential kitchen carries risk which leads to our organization's position as an Interested Party. However, we also acknowledge that updates to the bill incorporate many significant changes that meaningfully limit those risks. Among the enhancements within the legislation is restricting high-risk food processes, aligning food safety and sanitation standards with Ohio's Uniform Food Safety Code, requiring basic food safety training for operators, inspections of all areas within the home used for food production, and capping meal production which is appropriate for residential kitchen operations.

OEHA has some remaining concerns on food labeling for potentially hazardous foods, and with licensing exemptions for home food operations setting up and selling potentially hazardous foods at locations away from home. However, OEHA maintains its commitment to continue working with the sponsors and the Senate moving forward to address these concerns.

Again, OEHA is grateful for Rep. Gross and Rep. Humphrey's engagement and willingness to listen to public health professionals to strengthen this bill to better protect consumers while balancing support for entrepreneurship and small business innovation.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration of our testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.