



Seneca County General Health District
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March 24, 2025

S.B. No 147 Proponent Testimony

To: Chair Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

I will be in attendance at the hearing on March 25, 2025 and wish to provide testimony supporting the separation of Seneca County from the OSS Solid Waste District. My statements will provide support of the separation based on the need for additional resources to oversee WIN Waste Innovations of Seneca County Landfill adequately and efficiently. My statements will include recent emergencies that required additional personnel hours, along with highlighting needs for modernized equipment to effectively mitigate negative health risks as WIN Waste is on its way to becoming the largest landfill in Ohio.

Sincerely,

Julie Richards

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Good Afternoon Chair Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

We have developed a separate Landfill Division for the sole purpose of regulating and inspecting WIN Waste Landfill. Ohio makes it difficult to hire qualified staff as we are the only state in our geographic area that requires landfill inspectors to be Registered Environmental Health Specialists. There is a shortage in Ohio, and those qualifications are the same ones used for restaurant inspections, tattoo parlors, etc. By creating this separate division, we are able to hire Sanitarian- In-Training with the sole purpose of focusing on landfill inspections and provide landfill-specific training. This level of required expertise and training along with the stress of regulating and overseeing an entity that sues us when we file a violation, requires a higher salary than traditional public health sanitarians.

The WIN Waste Landfill in Seneca County is already one of the largest landfills in Ohio, and it is greatly expanding. It is simply not possible to oversee such a large project without additional funds. Currently, we receive \$ 0.40 per ton of waste. We are in need of modernized equipment, additional personnel (currently we have one person who is responding to emergencies like the recent leachate spills that occurred within a month and the train derailment in Attica) in addition to inspecting the landfill regularly. To date, our Director/Inspector has completed at least 18 inspections since mid-January when he took the position. He is in need of a clerk to help him procure equipment and help manage community calls and concerns. We are in the process of training a new inspector to assist with all of the fieldwork. She started with us yesterday and is a Sanitarian in Training.

OSS refuses to fund the salary of our landfill inspector, but instead funds just a limited number of our landfill oversight activities. Even for those limited activities, OSS uses every excuse to avoid payment. For example, Since the WIN Waste landfill is so large, and we are a small public health agency, we have hired consultants to help us with training of our inspectors and provide coverage during personnel training and overturn. When attempting to get some of the consultants' fees reimbursed by OSS, we were told we should not have hired someone from out of state because their travel is more expensive. They also handed me a sheet of paper with multiple grants they suggested we utilize. I am completely in support of responsible spending and appreciate checks and balances, however, we had applied for grants in the past and more recently, in 2024. Unfortunately, we were denied. We definitely do not deserve the condescending tone we with which we receive with any attempt we make to secure the funds necessary to properly regulate WIN Waste Landfill. In regards to hiring out-of-state consultants to help with training and provide their landfill expertise, it is next to impossible to hire a landfill engineer or expert in Ohio that has not worked for or with WIN Waste at some point in their career. We want to avoid those conflicts of interest. Our out-of-state consultants provide on-

site training along with their landfill expertise to help us regulate and provide oversight to WIN Waste. Again, this level of expertise is imperative in helping us as we build and grow our division that directly correlates with the growth and expansion of WIN Waste landfill.

A county separating from a solid waste district is not extraordinary. Currently, there are 61 other counties who are single-county solid waste districts. Therefore, we are asking that Seneca County be afforded the opportunity to manage our own funds to provide oversight to the landfill that is projected to grow by 43% in the very near future. This will allow us to make financial decisions with the funds that we are bringing into the county through out-of-state waste because of the landfill and ensure that WIN Waste is operating in a manner that helps ensure our residents and environment are safe.

Within the last month or so, WIN Waste experienced two major leachate spills on site. The first one involved 53,000 tons of leachate, and the second one is still under investigation. Both of these situations required numerous hours of SCGHD personnel to oversee and help contain the leachate to avoid contamination of our water supply. In addition to the on-site issues, we had personnel who also responded to the recent rail car derailment in Attica which resulted in about 200 cubic feet of contaminated soil that now needs to be removed and transported to the landfill. These are 3 examples of emergencies since mid-January when our Division was developed. By separating from OSS, Seneca County will be able to obtain the necessary funds in a more efficient manner to conduct inspections, provide emergency response to hazardous situations in the community and purchase equipment necessary to effectively do our job.