OEHA
OHIO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 234
COLUMBUS, OH 43216-0234
WWW.OHIOEHA.ORG

HB 59 Proponent Testimony
Presented by Courtney Myers, President
Ohio Environmental Health Association
Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
Chair Susan Manchester
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Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today as a proponent on House Bill 59. My name is Courtney Myers, and I serve as the President of the Ohio Environmental Health Association (OEHA).

OEHA represents nearly 600 Registered Environmental Health Specialists, Environmental Health Specialists In Training and other environmental health professionals across Ohio. Our members work in state agencies, local health departments, and private industry, dedicating their careers to protecting Ohioans through programs in food safety, water quality, vector control, solid waste management, sewage treatment, and many other essential areas of public health. The Ohio Environmental Health Association is a professional organization devoted to promoting and advancing environmental health across the state. Our mission is to support those professionals who safeguard the health of our communities by ensuring clean water, safe food, and healthy environments for all Ohioans.

House Bill 59 presents an important opportunity to modernize Ohio's environmental health credentialing process. The recommendations for our profession that are in the version of HB 59 As Passed by the House were developed by an OEHA work group focused on reducing barriers to entry into the profession while maintaining the high standards that protect public health. These proposed updates align with the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) standards and will help ensure that Ohio continues to attract and retain a skilled and competent environmental health workforce.

One of OEHA's key recommendations is to expand the definition of "basic sciences" used to determine eligibility for certification. Ohio's current definition is overly restrictive, unintentionally excluding qualified individuals who hold degrees in fields that are closely related to environmental health. By broadening the definition to include life, natural, physical, health, and public health sciences, Ohio can open doors for individuals with degrees in public health, biology, or environmental studies to pursue certification and sit for the NEHA exam. Aligning with NEHA's national standards will help address workforce shortages and reflect the multidisciplinary nature of today's environmental health challenges, from disease prevention to public health emergencies and regulatory enforcement.

OEHA also recommends reducing the timeframe required for Environmental Health Specialists In Training to achieve full credentialing. The current training period can discourage new graduates from entering the profession, especially as other public health fields offer quicker career pathways. By shortening the training period, while maintaining professional rigor, Ohio can improve recruitment and retention, supporting a more sustainable workforce ready to meet the state's evolving public health needs.

Finally, we support allowing more time for Environmental Health Specialists In Training to obtain full certification. Extending the timeframe from four years to five years would provide flexibility for professionals balancing work,

continuing education, and family obligations. This adjustment promotes career sustainability and supports a workforce that is both well-prepared and resilient.

Chair Manchester and members of the committee, these proposed updates to Ohio's law for our profession represent a balanced approach, maintaining high professional standards while improving accessibility and workforce development. They ensure Ohio remains competitive, aligned with national best practices, and supportive of the dedicated professionals who work every day to protect our communities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 59.