



OEHA

OHIO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

10W Broad St Suite 200
Columbus, OH 43215
info@OhioEHA.org

**HB 96 Interested Party Testimony
Presented by Courtney Myers, President
Ohio Environmental Health Association
Senate Health Committee
Chairman Steve Huffman
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Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on House Bill 96, Ohio's biennial operating budget. My name is Courtney Myers, and I am the President of the Ohio Environmental Health Association. Our association represents nearly 600 Registered Environmental Health Specialists—commonly called health inspectors—and other environmental health industry partners and practitioners in Ohio. I am here today to testify on two items related to changes passed by the Ohio House to the budget which are of concern to OEHA.

First, the House added a provision that prohibits the Ohio Department of Health from adopting rules requiring a soil evaluator or soil scientist to evaluate the soil type and slope for the installation of Household Treatment Sewage Systems (HSTS). HSTSs collect and treat wastewater of households that are not served by public sewers and are an expensive investment vital to a homeowner's property. Soil evaluation is a crucial piece of the HSTS design process which ensures the most appropriate HSTS type is installed in the most ideal location. Soil scientists are certified professionals who provide detailed soil evaluations including thorough, property-specific reports of current site and soil conditions. Soil survey maps found online are from USDA soil survey maps that were conducted decades ago. They are a generalized tool that can be helpful in the design process, but they provide insufficient information with varying soil conditions on the ground.

When soil characteristics are not properly identified, costly mistakes such as premature failure of a HSTS, using a more expensive technology or system type than necessary, or highly suitable lots being unnecessarily deemed "unbuildable," are likely. Not only can these types of failures lead to inappropriate discharge of waste, but they can cost homeowners thousands of dollars more when their finances are already stretched from funding a recently built HSTS. Current rules give county health departments the flexibility to complete the soil evaluations *if appropriate*, eliminating the need for a soil scientist in their county. Prohibiting the use of soil scientists, which are a trained and proven resource available to Ohioans, would be a disservice and potentially costly change for individuals across the state.

We ask you to remove this provision (DOHCD36) and return to current law.

The second item we want to bring to your attention is the removal of the resources for ODH's lead programs. Ohio's lead poisoning prevention program focuses on reducing childhood exposure to lead, primarily from lead dust in homes built before 1978—the source of 95% of elevated blood lead level cases. The program includes several key initiatives such as the Lead Abatement Fund and the Lead Safe Home Fund. The program promotes workforce development, community grants, and preventive home repairs to create healthier environments for children and families—especially those with children under 6 or pregnant women. Eliminating these critical funding lines undermines Ohio's ability to proactively address lead exposure.

We ask you to restore the Executive version of funding for ODH's lead abatement and lead-safe home fund (DOHCD12).

Once again, Chairman Huffman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on HB 96. I am happy to answer any questions you have at this time.