

Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair Lang, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 142.

My name is Ron Schmitt and I am a licensed professional plumbing and heating contractor. I operate a small family owned business in Englewood, Ohio. The business was started by my father in 1955 and I personally have been involved in the business for 45 years.

I currently serve on the board of the Ohio Association of Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors (PHCC) as a past president and on the PHCC National Board of Directors as a Zone Director for Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

I believe SB 142 it is good for our industry. It will require contractors to be licensed to work in our homes and would also require continuing education to keep up with all of the changes in the industry. It would also benefit the consumer for all of the reasons I have just stated and in addition would require contractors to obtain liability insurance and allow OCILB to help the consumer when needed.

My company performs warranty work for AO Smith water heaters. This includes AO Smith, State, Whirlpool, Reliance and Craft Master brands.

In this capacity I have been to numerous jobs where the flue opening in the chimney was too low for the new water heater so the contractor simply did not connect the flue leaving the consumer with a dangerous condition for carbon monoxide poisoning. Fortunately a part failed requiring a warranty service call. When we arrive and point out this danger, they ask if that is why they have been having headaches and feeling sick. Most of the situations we run into, the homeowners are luck to be alive.

We then have to repair the water heater and properly vent it at an additional cost to the consumer who had already paid to have the heater installed.

I have also found water heaters that were too tall to connect to the water lines or the flue so they cut the legs off the bottom to pick up an additional 3 inches, unfortunately these heaters pull all the air for combustion from the bottom of the heater and by cutting off the air supply the heaters will not work again resulting in additional expense for the consumer as we have to drain the heater, set it on blocks and reinstall the water heater.

I have found water heaters with gas lines leaking, water lines installed backwards or the front of the water heater installed to the back of the closet leaving no way to service the heater without removing the heater and reinstalling properly - again at additional expense to the consumer.

Plumbing installation and repairs done incorrectly can not only sicken people and pets, but could potentially kill through illegal cross connections, such as installing outside hose bibs without vacuum breakers allowing the chemicals being sprayed on the lawn or the trees to potentially be siphoned back into the drinking water or installing a non-anti siphon fill valve in the toilet tank and suddenly you have blue water coming out of your faucet from the sanitizing products you use in the toilet tank.

I have witnessed these events first hand. With SB142, contractors would be taking continuous education learning that all materials and products they install must be code compliant.

In every case when I explain to the homeowner that contractors are not required to be licensed to work in their homes they are shocked. They just assume it was required to have a license and do not understand why it is otherwise.

Every time we open a faucet, send our kids to school, daycare or to a friend's house we trust the plumber or contractor working on these systems is qualified. That they used lead free components on the water system, they repaired cross connections or removed sources of contamination, the water heater temperature is properly set to minimize risk of legionnaire disease, waste lines are properly installed to convey waste products away from our

homes to either a private or public sewerage system. To this degree we are all involved in plumbing.

The plumber protects the health, safety and welfare of the consumer and this is not a responsibility any of us in this room should take lightly as we have a responsibility to provide the consumer with the highest protection possible.

I believe SB142 will do this and that is why today I am asking you to join me in support of SB142.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the committee thank you for your attention to this matter. I would be glad to answer any questions at this time.