

# CUYAHOGA COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

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**Proponent Testimony on House Bill 357  
Terry Allan, Commissioner – Cuyahoga County Board of Health  
House Civil Justice Committee October 29, 2019**

Chairman Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony on HB 357. On behalf of the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, I would also like to thank Vice Chair Patton for sponsorship of this bill. It is the mission and responsibility of the Cuyahoga County Board of Health to protect health, safety, and environment, and this legislation supports those principles.

The Cuyahoga County Board of Health regularly works with local officials to address various nuisance conditions involving housing, health, refuse collection, and pollution. Over the past few years, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health has also been an active member of the Cleveland Cuyahoga County Environmental Crimes Task Force. Currently, the Task Force must work with the county prosecutor's office to address environmental crimes. HB 357 will greatly increase the efficacy of the Task Force by giving the Cleveland Housing Court concurrent jurisdiction with the Court of Common Pleas in cases involving original criminal actions and appeals from civil cases arising from environmental crimes. The Cleveland Housing Court has experience in these matters and the flexibility to implement more effective penalties on those convicted of environmental crimes in an effort to prevent recurring criminal activity.

This legislation mirrors the shared jurisdiction of the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas and the Franklin County Municipal Court Environmental Division, and would enable the Cleveland Housing court to apply their expertise on environmental issues in more cases while freeing up the Cuyahoga Court of Common Pleas to devote greater time to handling serious violent crimes.

The Cleveland Housing Court is fit to hear appeals of felony environmental cases because they are experienced and efficient at adjudicating crimes arising from the violation of the City's zoning, health, waste collection, and air pollution codes.

In its capacity as an active member of the Cleveland Cuyahoga County Environmental Crimes Task Force, The Cuyahoga County Board of Health is in strong support of the proposed changes as stated in House Bill 357. Allowing for concurrent jurisdiction between the court of common pleas and the Cleveland Housing Court will result in a much needed increase in efficiency and prosecution of environmental crimes and further demonstrate an ongoing commitment to effective public health policy to the residents of the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address the committee. Please contact Barry Grisez, program supervisor, at (216) 201-2000 ext. 1232 or [bgrisez@ccbh.net](mailto:bgrisez@ccbh.net) with any questions or concerns you may have.