



OEHA

OHIO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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SB 195 Interested Party Testimony

Carrie Yeager, President of the Ohio Environmental Health Association

Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Chairman Frank Hoagland

November 6, 2019

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chairman Schaffer, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Carrie Yeager and I am the Environmental Health Director at Butler County General Health District and am the President of the Ohio Environmental Health Association. OEHA's membership includes over 500 public health sanitarians, who are health inspectors at local health departments, state agencies, colleges and universities and other entities. I am here to testify on behalf of OEHA as an interested party on SB 195 introduced by Senator Tim Schaffer.

OEHA understands the desire from wineries for an exemption to provide commercially prepackaged foods such as cheese, sausage, crackers, pretzels or other snacks during wine tastings at their establishments, and that SB 195 is trying to correct language added to the budget by the Senate earlier this year for that purpose. Although prepackaged foods carry fewer risks for foodborne illness, please understand that winemaking, wine and proper sanitization and cleaning of wine glasses, plates, utensils, etc. also include risks for foodborne illness as well. Please know that OEHA examines issues related to the food programs at the Ohio Department of Agriculture and Ohio Department of Health to protect the public from foodborne illness while taking great care to balance the concerns of our industry partners as they strive to run their businesses.

Licensure exists to protect the public from foodborne illness. OEHA is concerned that creating exemptions for licensure for establishments such as wineries create situations where staff may not be properly trained in food safety which could lead to outbreaks of foodborne illness of their customers. Licensure ensures sanitarians conduct inspections during the food license year to verify minimum requirements by operators are met such as hand washing sinks, three compartment sinks for washing wine glasses, and a sink for proper disposal of mop water are occurring within licensed facilities. Without hand washing and ware washing sinks these facilities have the possibility of causing foodborne illness which could be caused by something as simple as lack of handwashing and properly sanitizing dishes by staff. Without licensure, sanitarians and Local Health Departments do not have the ability to perform their role to enforce the requirements of the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code.

OEHA desires a proper balance of the needs of wineries and all of our industry partners to exist simultaneously with the goal to serve and protect Ohio consumers. While we understand the request by wineries for an exemption to licensing requirements, OEHA firmly believes that these regulations exist to protect the public from foodborne illness and serious consideration should be taken before any efforts to roll back licensing standards.

Once again, Chairman Hoagland and members of the committee, thank you for your consideration of our testimony. I am available to answer any questions at this time.