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*“Working towards a healthy and safe Putnam County”*

### **Proponent Testimony – SB 338**

Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chair Huffman, and Ranking Member Fedor, please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Brandi Schrader, and I am currently employed by the Putnam County Health Department as their Director of Environmental Health. I am a Registered Environmental Health Specialist and a member of the Ohio Environmental Health Association. My testimony following is offering support for SB 338.

Having worked in public health, specifically environmental health, since 2007, I have observed and have had to adapt to many changes. One of the changes that rises to the top is the drastic change in the field portion of the food surveys from the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA). The field inspections during surveys have become cumbersome and stressful for both the inspector and facility. I feel that survey overall is very important to ensure that each local health department is following the laws and regulations that are in place. However, that survey from ODH and ODA should not be at the licensed facilities expense or expense of our inspectors. Where does equity come into play during this? Our inspectors work hard to develop a working relationship with the facility to obtain compliance. Many times, that relationship is weakened or lost after food survey inspections.

Our inspectors are required to obtain a 4-year degree with an emphasis on science, maintain credentials as a Registered Environmental Health Specialist and continue to improve with a minimum of 24 hours of continuing education every 2 years. However, by requiring the field survey to ODH and ODA’s standard, doesn’t it question if they are qualified? As a director, it is my job responsibility to ensure that all inspectors are trained to perform their job successfully. I personally do not know any director that would allow an inspector to perform inspections if they were not trained and competent.

In addition, part of our job is to work with the public, facilities, community partners and other agencies. The current field survey portion can create a barrier when developing working relationships with these groups. Furthermore, when staff are working with facilities on violations, equity is considered. The current field survey does not allow for equity to even be considered. For example, there are field surveys that have had to report the same violations numerous times because it was observed numerous times. The right thing to do would be to note that violation and list all the locations in which it was observed, not list it as a separate violation for each location. Does it make sense to see who can find more violations during an inspection, or should our focus be to evaluate the facility to assist with keeping our public safe?

As a director our priority is the public's safety and working with our facilities for compliance, not trying to see who can document more broken tiles during an inspection.

Field survey inspections are requiring inspectors to spend an unreasonable amount of time at a facility with the state representative. This in turn can take away the productivity of the facility as well. How can this inspection with the state agencies take 3-5 hours, or even longer for some inspectors? Our inspectors are setting eyes on all areas of the facilities during normal inspections and doing an extensive assessment at that time in less time.

The length of field survey inspections is detrimental for the licensed facilities for two reasons; 1.) added stress and disruption in their facility and 2.) with the increase in time spent in the facility it will ultimately increase the license fees in the future. The more time spent performing inspections increases the time spent in the program. That time is entered into a spreadsheet developed by ODH and ODA to calculate the license fees according to the risk level or type of license. In the long run, it could financially affect the businesses in Ohio. This new process allows for our staff to maintain a working relationship with the facilities without the potential of increasing the fees.

The new proposed process in SB 338 is an effective way to evaluate the inspectors, just as the private water program overseen by the Ohio Department of Health. The testing requirement has been effective and efficient for the private water system program. It confirms the inspector has the knowledge and understanding of the laws and regulations to perform their job duties.

I personally appreciate your time and encourage you to support SB 338.

Respectfully,



Brandi Schrader, M. Ed., REHS  
Director of Environmental Health