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## MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

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**HB 2131—House Health Care Committee**

**February 6, 2013**

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### **Introduction**

Good morning, Chair Greenlick and members of the committee, my name is Lila Wickham and I am the Director of Environmental Health at the Multnomah County Health Department. I am testifying in support of HB 2131 with amendments.

### **The Problem**

Environmental public health works to improve livability in the community and prevent disease transmission. Bedbugs are not known to transmit disease like mosquitoes, they we know they cause significant emotional, physical and financial distress. Bedbugs can affect anyone who stays in a hotel, lives in an apartment or sleeps in a bed. Many people attempt to combat bedbugs using dangerous pesticides and other home remedies. The reality is the help of a pest management professional is often times the only effective solution. However, this is difficult for people with limited incomes, disabilities, mental health issues and low-income housing providers who may have trouble affording such treatment.

### **Identifying the Scope of the Problem**

How bad are bedbugs in our community? We don't know. We do know that identifying the scope of the problem is critical to creating effective evidence-based solutions. Good data is essential to directing our limited resources to the right place.

### **The Solution**

House Bill 2131 would allow us to collect data from pest management companies who volunteer to make a report. It would allow them to tell public health professionals where they are applying bedbug pesticides without fear of harm to their customers. The County's health inspection records that are public today will still remain public after this bill is passed. No public record today is impacted.

We know this will make a difference. As you heard from Commissioner Kafoury, Multnomah County convened a workgroup that includes the Oregon Pest Control Association, Oregon Restaurant and Lodging, Metro, NW Multifamily Housing, Greater Portland Landlord Association, Portland Public Schools, the Oregon Child Care Division, Community Alliance of Tenants and multiple housing providers. I mention this because the workgroup supports this bill and some of them are here today to testify.

Our professional pesticide operator partners have the data on where bedbugs are in our community. They have agreed to provide this data to the county health department as long as their customers can be protected from disclosure. This bill provides a

protection similar to that given to other public health information and used for public health analysis.

Bedbugs impact the various sectors of our community quite differently. But, one thing remains constant: the need for a clear understanding of the scope of the problem, including the ability to establish trends. Good data is essential to the design of effective approaches to combat this problem. House Bill 2131 removes barriers to collecting that data by ensuring privacy to the families and businesses that deal with infestations, through no fault of their own.

**The dash 1 amendment clarifies that public health can publish aggregate compilations of data, so long as no individual person, location or business is disclosed or identified. This reaffirms that the purpose of the bill is to equip Public Health with a clearer picture of the problem from a community-perspective. This bill with the Dash 1 amendment only impacts the new, voluntarily supplied reports by pest management companies.**

**The dash 2 amendment makes it absolutely clear that this bill only exempts data about pesticide applications for bedbugs that is voluntarily provided by a pest control operator - data that is currently not available. All other information, such as hotel inspections reports, will remain public record. All information that is currently public record will remain public record.**

**We have asked that a third amendment be drafted to strike lines 18-22. It has always been the intent of this concept that the data is only for use by Local Health Authorities.**

I ask for your support of House Bill 2131 with the Dash1, 2 and the potential third amendment so we can more efficiently address this community health concern in a way that makes the most cost-effective use of scarce public resources.

Thank you for your time and I am available to discuss any questions or concerns you might have.