

TO: The House Committee on Energy and Environment

RE: HB 4145 02/13/2014

As a member of the Multnomah County Bed Bug Work Group for over 5 years, I am keenly aware of how this pest affects the people of Oregon. I understand the impact they have on our most vulnerable citizens in our communities.

As a licensed Oregon State Pesticide Consultant for over 11 years, I have worked with most of the Oregon Pest Control Operators (PCOs) in their efforts to eradicate this pest. I understand the challenges and successes they have had over the last several years as the level of infestations has increased.

I believe that bed bugs will be part of our culture going forward; that we will not be able to completely eliminate them. For this reason, training and education are crucial to the PCO industry. This should be in conjunction with the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Pesticide Division making sure that licensing exams adequately test for knowledge and understanding of bed bugs and their proper treatment.

- I am in favor of increasing bed bug questions on current licensing exams.

One concern we have discussed as an industry, as part of the County work group and as part of the Oregon Pest Control Association is the occasional unscrupulous business that takes advantage of peoples fear and misunderstanding of bed bugs. These companies are atypical of the industry and are not exclusive of the pest control industry, we can find them in every trade. I think we can all agree that businesses that prey on the weak should be found and shut down.

Unfortunately, no amount of legislation or training or licensing or testing will be able to stop the few who choose to work outside of industry norms.

Therefore, I believe that any further licensing or legislation will only create a burden for the legitimate businesses in the great state of Oregon. To create separate licensing categories for bed bugs will create financial hardships on the small businesses that make up over 80% of our PCO industry. The cost to test and license every company and every technician would be significant. These costs would then be passed along to the very people we are trying to protect.

At the ODA Pesticides Division, creating a new license category would be time consuming and would challenge already scarce resources needed for more critical functions. Licensing fees would not cover this expense. Taking revenue elsewhere out of the State Budget to fund this does not seem prudent either.

- I oppose any additional licensing categories specific to bed bugs.

It is my experience that educating the population on bed bugs is one of the best uses of private and government resources in this matter. When the consumer is aware, they have the power to make better choices. An educated consumer can spot the frauds and those who will not perform adequate

treatments. They also understand their rights and will hold businesses accountable for their actions or inactions. There are multiple agencies dedicated to providing this information.

- It is my opinion that education is where State government has the ability to provide the most benefit to its citizens regarding bed bugs.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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For your additional consideration:

Bed bugs are not a public health *threat* as they have not been shown to transmit disease.

Bed bugs may be considered a public health *concern* as they spread within a community like a communicable disease. They can create emotional and physical distress along with stigma.

Bed bug treatments are very labor intensive. Therefore, they can be costly. A proper treatment consists of a thorough inspection, cleaning, mechanical measures, chemical applications and follow up.

Individuals who self treat for bed bugs are far more likely to misuse pesticides than our professional applicators. Most will do this in an effort to save money. They lack the knowledge and training necessary to apply products in a safe manner. They are not held to any standards or scrutiny.