



March 16, 2017

TO: The Honorable Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services and Housing

FROM: Gabriela Goldfarb, Manager  
Environmental Public Health Section  
Center for Health Protection  
Public Health Division  
Oregon Health Authority

SUBJECT: House Bill 2919, Senior Community Facilities

Chair Keny-Guyer and members of the committee; I am Gabriela Goldfarb, Manager of the Environmental Public Health Section at the Oregon Health Authority. I am here to provide information about House Bill 2919.

HB 2919 addresses a current gap in Oregon's food safety system by requiring senior community residence kitchens to meet best practices for food safety in food service establishments. HB 2919 as introduced requires OHA to adopt rules to establish a separate new inspection and enforcement program for senior community residences. We are in conversation with the bill sponsor and have provided information on opportunities to achieve the intent of this measure at reduced cost while taking advantage of existing food safety regulation. For example, it would be possible to modify existing statute to include senior community residence kitchens in the definition of kitchens subject to the state's existing food safety regulatory program.

This modification would make these facilities subject to the same licensing, inspection and enforcement provisions as any other food service establishment that serves the public. These kitchens serve meals to older adults who may be more vulnerable to foodborne illness than other people and for whom the result can be severe illness or death. In fact, according to 2013 surveillance data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the highest percentages of persons who were hospitalized with foodborne illness and who eventually died from infection were those aged 65 and older.

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OHA currently has food service standards in place for similar facilities that our county partners license and inspect, such as senior meal sites and hospital kitchens. These standards are based upon national recommendations provided by the US Food and Drug Administration. These existing standards also include enforcement mechanisms similar to those required under HB 2919.

Such a change would result in no fiscal impact for OHA and would allow oversight of food service operations in senior community facilities to be implemented as soon as the bill goes into effect. In addition, no additional rulemaking would be necessary nor would OHA need to provide any training to local health department staff to properly implement the requirements.

I would be happy to provide any additional information you need and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.