



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

PO Box 47990 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

February 7, 2007

The Honorable Tom Campbell
Select Committee on Environmental Health Chair
Washington State House of Representatives
Post Office Box 40600
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600

Dear Dr. Campbell:

I am writing to let you know of the Board's concerns with House Bill 1650, which is scheduled to be heard this evening by the House Select Committee on Environmental Health. This bill would require cities, towns, and counties outside of marine recovery areas to inventory and assure that on-site wastewater systems are inspected at least every five years to address problems with failing systems. It includes intent for encouraging expansion of sanitary sewage systems to help address these problems. Although the Board believes this bill primarily impacts local governments, it also reflects on Board rules.

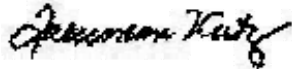
The Board supports the goals of the bill to identify and resolve problems with failing on-site sewage systems, particularly in urban areas where homeowners might assume they are served by a public sewer system and might not be aware of maintenance needs for their on-site sewage system. However, the Board has concerns that this bill could cause confusion in ongoing local health jurisdiction on-site sewage system management programs required by existing law and rules. Local health agency programs are busy implementing recently revised Board rules (chapter 246-272A WAC) and legislation from last session (3SHB 1458). The Board feels these should be given a chance to work before local governments are asked to undertake new on-site system management activities. The Board also has concerns that without secure funding for additional new programs, local jurisdictions might need to divert funds used for existing on-site management programs to the new activities.

The relationships between local health jurisdictions and the local governments within them are complex. Local health officers are under the control of local boards of health, rather than local legislative or administrative officials. The Board favors an approach that would strengthen local health jurisdiction programs to identify and address failing on-site sewage systems. Additional statutory authority for local health officials to obtain warrants to inspect systems would help.

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Thank you for considering the Board's concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Treuman Katz". The signature is written in a cursive style with some ink bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.

Treuman Katz, Chair
Washington State Board of Health

cc: House Select Committee on Environmental Health Members
The Honorable Bill Fromhold, Washington State House of Representatives
Washington State Board of Health Members
Ms. Christina Hulet, Governor's Executive Policy Office
Mr. Brian Peyton, Department of Health
Mr. Craig McLaughlin, Washington State Board of Health