



SB 1125 (2021-22 Legislative Session)

Testimony Presented to The Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee

By

Ron Gribik, VP Operations CWM Environmental

October 25, 2022.

Good morning, Chairman Yaw, Chairwoman Comitta and the esteemed members of the Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to testify in support of SB1125 sponsored by Senator Pittman and Senator Fontana.

My name is Ron Gribik, and I am the VP of Operations for a lab location of CWM Environmental. My colleagues and I are appreciative of the Senate Environmental Resource & Energy Committee and the sponsors of SB 1125 for holding this hearing and for their support of implementing public policy to mitigate the risk of Legionnaires' disease. Unlike most of my colleagues, I am not a scientist, a microbiologist, or a doctor. I am a business manager with years of hands-on experience dealing with clients that range from schools to healthcare facilities to public buildings. I will let my associates expound on the merits of legislation to help protect the public from this growing health crisis. The obvious health benefits addressed by the bill speak for themselves. My perspective in support of the legislation takes us in a different direction in the fight against legionella bacteria. As a laboratory, my location has performed thousands of tests since Medicare (CMS) issued a directive to hospitals and nursing homes to develop and implement water management plans. Our clients, whether voluntarily or by regulation, are "doing the right thing" by monitoring the levels of legionella pneumophila bacteria in their buildings. But this is where my active support of SB 1125 begins.

Once a client receives analytical results, the question arises, "now what?" For a facility without a water management plan in place, uncertainty of what to do next is the norm. Interpretation of results, consequential retesting, and even possible remediation steps are common topics that clients pose to us. The initial advice to the client is to ask them, "what does your water management plan direct you to do?" In the absence of a plan, there can be needless dollars spent on manpower hours re-sampling, re-testing, remediation, and even needlessly making sections of buildings inaccessible to the public. On the contrary, an entity with a well-written plan and active committee, has a better understanding of interpreting results and knowing what to do next.

I support this claim with an anecdotal story client. A school district in southwestern PA recently voluntarily had the water in their buildings tested, including the high school. Of the 5 samples, several (2) came back with "positive" hits (greater than "no detect"). From experience, the "hits" were low grade detections compared to other results of other clients. However, without a water management plan in place (not a regulatory requirement currently), there was confusion, concern, and fear about what to do next. Ultimately the school took measures to eradicate the bacteria through basic means. This resulted in a second round of analysis, that showed progress. One of the sample sites came back

“no detect” while the other site came back with a “hit” that was barely detectable. Understandably, the superintendent acted cautiously by cordoning off the bathroom in question and had the maintenance staff perform additional remediation efforts. The next set of samples came back “no detect.” One could debate if the low level of detection warranted the extreme measures taken. However, considering the serious nature of Legionnaires Disease, the superintendent’s actions are understandable.

My point to this story is that if the district had a water management plan in place (something that is not required at this time), it would have had direction on how to interpret the results and what measures to take to protect everyone with access to the building. There are other examples of situations like this one.

I ask the committee to strongly consider supporting this bill and ultimately passing it. Yes, there are costs involved but SB 1125. While the primary goal is to protect the public, the bill has measures in it to minimize the financial burden to owners. The “hidden” benefit of the bill is to alleviate the uncertainty and needless expenses of “now what?” with a well-written water management plan.

Sincerely,

Ron Gribik, VP Operations

(Cell) 724-859-2851

rgribik@cwmenvironmental.com