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Senator Bob Smith
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Suite E-5
Piscataway, NJ 08854

Senator Joseph Kyrillos
1715 Highway 35
Suite 303
Middletown, NJ 07748

NJ State League of Municipalities
Attn: Hon. James Anzaldi, President
222 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08608

April 7, 2010

Dear Senator Smith, Senator Kyrillos, Honorable Anzaldi,

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) represents the environmental health profession nationwide and is a strong advocate for excellence in the practice of public health. Over the last several years, as many state and local governments have experienced increasing budget stress and have cut services and staffing, NEHA has observed a serious erosion of the capacity of state and local health departments to provide quality public health services and to protect the public from disease.

Most localities depend on a very small cadre of environmental health professionals to protect their communities from disease. Downsizing of environmental health programs has often resulted in fewer inspections of restaurants and other food service facilities, less capacity to investigate foodborne illness outbreaks and citizen complaints, and a diminished ability to respond to emergencies and natural disasters. Further downsizing of the environmental health workforce or replacing well-trained and credentialed professionals with paraprofessionals inevitably will further weaken the U.S.'s public health infrastructure and put the public at even greater health risk.

Despite the economic challenges of our times, NEHA strongly believes that:

- Health is the basis of every community's prosperity
- Providing safe food, safe drinking water, safe sewage disposal, clean air, and a healthy living environment should not be considered a luxury in any community
- Assuring a healthy living environment requires an adequate workforce of well-trained and credentialed environmental health professionals
- In order for local health units to attract and retain good environmental health professionals, localities need to provide a stable work environment with a career ladder that rewards excellence

While consolidations of public health units can be effective in reducing administrative costs and achieving economies of scale, significant reductions in the size of the environmental health work force in the field inevitably result in a reduction in the public health unit's capacity to protect the health of the community. In light of the disturbing loss of public health capacity nationwide in the field of environmental health, NEHA would like to express its concern about S-458 and its potential to lead to further reductions in New Jersey's capacity to protect the public's health.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W.C. Roberts", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Welford C. Roberts, REHS/RS, DAAS, PhD.
President, National Environmental Health Association