



## MEHA Update from the MEHA Executive Board

September, 2011

### Sanitarian Licensure Update:

After Representative Woodrow Stanley's sanitarian licensure bill was approved by Michigan's House of Representatives last fall, the MEHA Executive Board had high hopes it would be approved by the Michigan's Senate as well. Unfortunately, the Senate didn't take action on the bill and it died at the end of last year's legislative session. During the past six months MEHA and its government relations consultant, Public Affairs Associates (PAA), has developed a strong relationship with Senator Mike Nofs and his staff with the goal of reintroducing a sanitarian licensure bill during this legislative session. Senator Nofs held the first of several workgroup meetings on August 10<sup>th</sup> to address the concerns expressed by Michigan's state agencies, professional associations and private industry. MDCH, MDARD, Michigan's Bureau of Health Professions Licensing, representatives from the Society of Industrial Hygienists, and several large energy corporations expressed concerns about how licensure would affect their employees and association members. MEHA members Adam London, Eric Pessell, and Steve Hall, and Tyrone Sanders of Public Affairs Associates, participated in the workgroup meeting to provide information about why licensure is important for the environmental health profession and to answer workgroup participants' questions.

Senator Nofs and his staff are strong advocates for sanitarian licensure and have assured us that they will move forward with this effort, however; the workgroup meeting highlighted barriers to licensure legislation which may be very difficult to overcome at this time.

- Governor Snyder's focus is reducing government and to be in line with that, the Bureau of Health Professions Licensing staff are not in favor of creating a new professional license and the regulatory system to administer a new sanitarian license program.
- Governor Snyder and the legislature are unlikely to override private sector corporation opposition to any licensing requirement that affects corporate employees.
- MDARD and MDEQ do not support licensure; especially a broad scope-of-practice that would affect a large number of state employees.
- MDCH has advised us that licensure is not in line with the governor's agenda and would face difficult odds.

It will be a serious challenge during the next few months to address the barriers to licensure while at the same time meeting our goals for improving the environmental health profession. Senator Nofs has suggested a new approach which, although it requires some compromise on our part, offers an opportunity to move forward with our licensure effort.

With input from MEHA, MALEHA, and PAA, Senator Nofs staff will take the following actions this fall:

- Revise the bill's scope-of-practice limiting professional regulation to anyone performing enforcement of the environmental health provisions of Michigan's Public Health Code and Michigan's Food Law. This will clearly define the state and local public health employees who will require a credential, and address the negative opposition from private industry, other professional associations, and state agencies.
- Move forward with MEHA's goal of sanitarian licensure, but modify our strategy by changing the required credential from a Michigan license to the National Environmental Health Association, Registered Environmental Health Specialist credential. Since NEHA has a credential administration system already in-place. Specifying the NEHA REHS credential will address the opposition from Michigan's licensing bureau and the governor's office. Adam London has been assured by NEHA management that reciprocity for individuals currently holding a Michigan RS license will be provided by NEHA.
- Complete a bill revision during the month of September and plan to introduce it in the Senate in October.

Knowing how complex the legislative process is and how important it is for MEHA to have professional guidance about the legislative process. The MEHA Executive Board voted to approve a retainer for professional service with Public Affairs Associates. PAA has exceptional government relations expertise and has been and will continue to be our advocate during the next few months. We'll rely on PAA to communicate our goals to Sen. Nofs staff, to work with a House of Representatives sponsor in the near future, and to provide guidance to us about how MEHA can participate in this process. The balance of the licensure strategic fund will be used to pay the PAA fee.

If you have questions or comments about sanitarian licensure, please e-mail them to Lynne Madison at [lmadison@meha.net](mailto:lmadison@meha.net).