



720 South Colorado Blvd.
Suite 1000-N
Denver, Colorado 80246-1926
Phone (303) 756-9090
Fax (303) 691-9490
www.neha.org

December 11, 2008

Mike Taylor, JD
Research Professor in the Department of Health Policy
George Washington University
School of Public Health and Health Services

Dear Dr. Taylor:

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the membership of the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), we would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in the development of the report on "Strengthening State and Local Roles in an Integrated National Food Safety System." This important initiative that you and your colleagues at George Washington University have undertaken, will, in our view, contribute significantly to national dialog concerning this critical public health issue.

NEHA, throughout its seventy-one year history, has always identified food safety and protection as one of our signature issues. NEHA has taken a national leadership role in the development of education and training programs on this important topic. We provide nationally recognized credentials in food safety, present national and regional workshops and conferences, produce and distribute a wide variety of high-quality training and education materials, and provide on-line educational offerings in the area of food safety. This represents a nearly century long commitment to the thousands of environmental health professionals involved in food safety. It represents an essential commitment to our core mission of educating and training the nation's environmental health professionals, and giving voice to their professional needs and concerns.

I would also note that NEHA has close professional associations with all the relevant federal agencies that have statutory responsibilities for the nation's food safety system. We actively participate in any number of national coalitions and partnerships- Council for Improved Foodborne Illness Response (CIFOR), Conference for Food Protection (CFP) Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) among them. Additionally, we work closely with other NGO's (ASTHO, NACCHO and APHA, to name a few), on collaborative efforts to insure a more effective national food safety system.

Reflecting on our ever-growing concern surrounding the lack of coordination, capacity and resources systemically in the national food safety structure, NEHA developed a set of policy recommendations that you will find as attachments to this note. The NEHA Board of Directors adopted these policy documents at our December, 2008 meeting. Specifically, the first document contains a set of policy recommendations organized around what we view as key areas of deficiency currently in the national system, both at the federal as well as state

and local levels. The second document is an appendix document that reviews and details both NEHA's history and profile in food safety, in addition to summarizing our current programs and activities.

We are without question facing critical challenges in our commonly held goals of improving the nation's food safety infrastructure and reducing the incidents of illness and death attributable to foodborne illness. We also view this point in time, as we welcome a new administration and congress, as a unique opportunity to finally address these long overdue priorities. We appreciate your consideration of this material and welcome the opportunity to further our future work together in assuring an improved national food safety system.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard A. Pantages". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard A. Pantages, R.E.H.S
President, NEHA