



April 9, 2021

Select Subcommittee of the South Carolina Senate Medical Affairs Committee
Suite 412, Gressette Office Building
Post Office Box 142
Columbia, South Carolina 29202

Chairman Peeler and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to advise you of the Chamber's support of S.2, as amended by the subcommittee on March 31, 2021. This bill, as amended, proposes to separate the functions of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) into two cabinet agencies: the Department of Environmental Services and the Department of Public and Behavioral Health. It would also consolidate water resource planning and regulatory oversight in the State by combining those functions into a single agency.

As you know, the business community frequently interacts with DHEC staff and is regulated by the agency in many program areas, including, but not limited to, air quality, solid and hazardous waste, dam safety, water pollution compliance and enforcement, and drinking water protection. Due to the extent of agency's oversight of the regulated community, our Chamber members took a keen interest in S.2 when it was prefiled in December of 2020.

As originally filed, the business community had a number of concerns about relocating the environmental functions of DHEC to the SC Department of Agriculture and the SC Department of Natural Resources. Those DHEC environmental programs did not at all seem to align with the existing missions of those two agencies, and our members were extremely concerned about interruptions and uncertainty in the regulatory process due to the original reorganization proposal. The Subcommittee Amendment adopted on March 31st addresses those concerns and would instead shift DHEC's current environmental functions to a new stand-alone agency.

Although the business community has always been comfortable working with the Office of Environmental Affairs at DHEC, if legislative conversations continue about restructuring the agency, we believe that S.2 as amended offers a reasonable solution that will allow for the least interruption to business operations in the near term and the best support for economic development in our State going forward.

Thank you for your work on the behalf of South Carolinians. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

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