

Testimony to Board of Health

July 18, 2002, hearing on Legislative Appropriations Requests

Board Members and Members of the Texas Department of Health:

I am Jimmy Barker, a member of the Texas Radiation Advisory Board (TRAB), a governor appointed board that advises the state on radiation issues. Today I would like to mention two important radiation issues and ask that you consider them when making decisions about the Legislative Appropriation Request for the Texas Department of Health and its Bureau of Radiation Control. These issues are:

- 1. Health Physicist Salaries**
- 2. Regulatory Program for Lasers and Intense Pulsed Light Sources**

The TRAB has studied both these issues over the past several years and made recommendations about each of them.

About Health Physicist Salaries, TRAB endorsed increasing the salaries for technical staff of the Bureau of Radiation Control at its meeting in January 2002. TRAB noted the increase would be *revenue neutral* to the state. The increases would be paid for by fees. We believe an increase in salary is

necessary to deal with the chronic recruitment and retention problems the Bureau of Radiation Control is having. Without adequate technical staff, BRC cannot perform the mandated functions like performing inspections to assure security of radioactive materials, and cannot adequately respond to accidents and incidents, or some of the latest concerns such as “dirty bomb” threats. In January, TRAB wrote letters regarding the salary issue to:

Board of Health

House Environmental Regulation Committee

House Appropriations Committee

Senate Finance Committee

Also, Michael Ford, CHP, Vice Chair, testified at the House Environmental Regulation Committee, April 29, 2002, about it.

Also, from a letter to the Board of Health Chair dated July 12, 2002, I quote Dr. Dale Klein, who is the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Nuclear and Chemical and Biological Defense Programs). Dr. Klein is a former TRAB chair and Texas resident. He writes:

“I can assure you from my present assignment that issues involving radiation and the people that ensure the proper use of radioactive materials is

extremely important. Salary support for the BRC Technical Staff is too important to neglect.”

Secondly, I would like you to consider the need for a Regulatory Program for Lasers and Intense Pulsed Light Sources. I know you may not have material about this in front of you today and have asked that a short written summary be given to you. Saturday, TRAB will consider this at its quarterly meeting. Recommendations from that meeting will be sent to the Board of Health. I can tell you that in the past legislative session, TRAB recommended a regulatory program for lasers as an exceptional item in the Legislative Appropriations Request for the Texas Department of Health. The Bureau of Radiation Control has a minimal inspection program for these devices because of lack of staff and other priorities. However, the use of lasers and intense pulsed light devices has dramatically increased during the past decade. More citizens are now at risk in the event of an accident or incident. It is important to consider what the department should be doing to protect the public so I ask that you give that consideration. After the meeting Saturday, we will be providing you with the recommendations of TRAB.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the appropriations request.

