March 7, 2019

Utah Legislature
Utah State Capital Complex
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

Re: Oppose New Taxes on Protecting Public Health and Property in HB 441

Dear Utah Lawmakers:

The Utah Pest Management Association (UPMA) represents professional structural pest management or “pest control” companies in Utah and appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 441 and the concept of applying sales taxes to protecting public health and property. UPMA member companies manage pests including rats, mice, ants, cockroaches, bed bugs, mosquitoes, spiders, stinging insects, termites and other pests in countless commercial, residential and institutional settings. UPMA members are committed to providing quality pest management services that protect public health, food and property.

UPMA urges you to exempt the structural pest management industry from any sales taxes on services. Any new sales taxes on pest management services proposed in HB 441 or any other legislation would be an economic hindrance to protecting public health and property in Utah—leaving residents and visitors more vulnerable to dangerous and deadly pests. Sales taxes on pest management services would not only increase the cost of protecting public health and property, but it would also threaten the livelihoods of UPMA member companies and commercial applicators and registered technicians employed in Utah. The pest management industry should be exempt from sales taxes on services. Our elected officials should be creating more opportunities, not less, to keep dangerous and deadly pests out of Utah homes and businesses.

Protecting Public Health

Public health officials attribute the quality of life we have today to three things: better pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and better sanitation and better pest control. The proposed service taxes would raise the cost of protecting against the dangerous and deadly pests.

Rodents

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rodents transmit over 35 diseases such as hantavirus, rat bite fever, trichinosis, plague, infectious jaundice, Weil’s disease, and leptospirosis.1 Leptospirosis results in an estimated 1.03 million annual cases and 58,900 deaths around the world. Rodents also transmit diseases like murine typhus and

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salmonellosis indirectly through their droppings, saliva, urine and hosting fleas. Leptospirosis results in an estimated 1.03 million annual cases and 58,900 deaths around the world.\textsuperscript{2} While the majority of deaths caused by leptospirosis occur in the developing world, the United States is not immune, as three people in New York City were infected in 2017, resulting in one death.\textsuperscript{3} Renowned rodentologist Dr. Bobby Corrigan, emphasizes that, “It’s hard to quantify just how much money rats are costing health systems, because most people sickened by rats have flu-like symptoms, and many don’t know they’ve been exposed to a rat.”\textsuperscript{4} Rodents also transmit diseases like murine typhus and salmonellosis indirectly through their droppings, saliva, urine and hosting fleas. Additionally, they exacerbate allergies and asthma attacks as a result of allergenic proteins in their urine and feces.

\textbf{Cockroaches}

Cockroaches spread at least 33 kinds of bacteria, six kinds of parasitic worms and at least seven other kinds of human pathogens. Different forms of gastroenteritis (food poisoning, dysentery, diarrhea, and other illnesses) appear to be the principal diseases transmitted by German cockroaches. The organisms causing these diseases are carried on the legs and bodies of cockroaches and are deposited on food and utensils as the cockroaches forage. Cockroach excrement and cast skins also contain a number of allergens to which many people exhibit allergic responses, such as skin rashes, watery eyes and sneezing, congestion of nasal passages, and asthma.\textsuperscript{5} Suppression and eradication are vital to health care facilities, homes, and sites where food is prepared or served. Cockroaches contaminate food and spread filth by walking through contaminated areas. They commonly carry disease-causing organisms like staphylococci, streptococcus, coliform, molds, salmonella, yeasts, and clostridia.

\textbf{Ticks}

For ticks, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) asserts that Americans should consider hiring a professional pest management company for pesticide treatments around the home and in the yard and attributes pesticide applications as an effective way to reduce in tick populations around residences.\textsuperscript{6} Tick species that are endemic to Utah are the Rocky Mountain wood tick, Western black-legged tick, and Winter tick.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{5} "German Cockroaches (Department of Entomology)." Department of Entomology (Penn State University). January 2013. http://ento.psu.edu/extension/factsheets/german-cockroaches.
\textsuperscript{6} "Preventing Ticks in the Yard | Lyme Disease | CDC," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/prev/in_the_yard.html.
Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF) is found in Utah and transmitted by ticks. RMSF causes high fever, severe headache, body aches, nausea, and chills. 50% of cases will develop a raised red rash on the arms and legs (particularly the hands and feet). The rash then spreads to the trunk of the body. RMSF can be fatal if not treated promptly.  

Colorado Tick Fever (CTF) is caused by a virus. It is spread to humans from the bite of a wood tick. Symptoms of CTF include high fever, chills, nausea, and severe headache, and in some instances a red, raised rash. At this time there is no specific treatment for CTF.  

Lyme disease is also found in Utah and caused by the bacterium Borrelia burgdorferi and is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks. Typical symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic skin rash called erythema migrans. If left untreated, the infection can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system. 

Flies

Flies are much more than a buzzing annoyance, in fact, the threats they pose are serious. According to the Penn State Department of Entomology, flies carry a plethora of harrowing diseases because they feed on fecal matter, discharges from wounds and sores, and excrete and vomit on food among other causes: “House flies are strongly suspected of transmitting at least 65 diseases to humans, including typhoid fever, dysentery, cholera, poliomyelitis, yaws, anthrax, tularemia, leprosy and tuberculosis. Flies regurgitate and excrete wherever they come to rest and thereby mechanically transmit disease organisms.”

Additionally, a 2013 National Institute of Health (NIH) published study titled, “Role of Flies as Vectors of Foodborne Pathogens in Rural Areas” has shown that various species of flies not only carry harmful bacteria such as, Campylobacter, E. coli, Salmonella, and Shigella, but also multiple viruses and contribute to the resistance of antibiotics across the world. This study found that regarding anti-biotic resistance, “…the carriage of antibiotic resistant bacteria by flies in the environment increases the potential for human exposure to drug-resistant bacteria.”

Bed Bugs

A 2018 survey conducted by the National Pest Management Association, commissioned by a third-party market research firm in conjunction with survey trends with a previous partnership with the University of Kentucky, found that 36 percent of pest control professionals have treated for bedbugs in hospitals, 39 percent in doctor’s offices and outpatient facilities, while

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9 “Tickborne diseases in Utah,” Utah Department of Health
59 percent did so in nursing homes.\textsuperscript{13}

Although bedbugs have been linked to over 40 disease causing agents, they are not considered vectors of disease. It is important to note that bed bugs have been shown to successfully transmit \textit{Trypansoma Cruzi}, the parasite that is responsible for Chagas disease, in laboratory settings. Chagas disease can cause serious chronic health concerns including cardiac heart failure and an enlarged esophagus and colon with reduced ability to swallow or defecate.\textsuperscript{14} Although they are not recognized as a vector of disease, bed bugs are classified as significant public health pests by the EPA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This is due to their bites that can leave itchy, red welts with the potential for a secondary infection caused by scratching at the bites and causing skin trauma, allowing for a port of entry for infection. Often overlooked, yet just as significant, are the psychological symptoms that result from infestations that can cause anxiety, sleeplessness, and PTSD in extreme cases.\textsuperscript{15}

Because bedbugs and their eggs hitchhike in bags, shoes and on people, they easily can be brought into a health care facility. Bedbugs most often are found in patient room beds, waiting area furniture, and laundry facilities.\textsuperscript{16} Numerous reports have been published on bed bugs in health care facilities, including a 2015 study published in Epidemiology & Infection, where an outbreak of bed bugs caused widespread rashes and sleeplessness in admitted newborns and mothers then spread throughout the facility, further impacting healthcare professionals and their families after the bed bugs were brought home. The severity of bed bug cases in sensitive facilities where people are sick, disabled, elderly, and young should not be undermined when considering proper treatment and implementing prevention.

\textbf{Mosquitoes}

Diseases transmitted primarily by mosquitoes include the West Nile virus, Chikungunya, and Dengue with no known vaccine. Regarding West Nile virus in 2017, Utah had 443 positive mosquito pools, 35 animals, and 59 human cases including four deaths.\textsuperscript{17} Backyard and residential mosquito treatments are effective at reducing mosquito populations and protecting Utah families and pregnant women. Mosquitoes also transmit the Zika Virus-resulting in a terrible birth defect called microcephaly, which is characterized by a smaller than average size head and incomplete brain development.\textsuperscript{18} We encourage you to not increase the cost of protecting public health and Utah families from dangerous and deadly mosquitoes.

\textsuperscript{14} Bed Bugs (\textit{Cimex lectularius}) as Vectors of Trypanosoma cruzi. 2015. American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.
\textsuperscript{16} Jim Fredericks, “How to Control Pests in Health Care Facilities.”
Stinging Insects

According to the American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, more than two million Americans are allergic to stinging insects, more than 500,000 enter hospital emergency rooms every year suffering from insect stings, and between 40-150 people a year die as a result of these stings.

Protecting Utah Businesses & Property

Businesses throughout Utah rely on the pest management industry to protect their products and services to maintain continued revenue through safe products and reliable reputations.

Utah Food Industry

Food processing plants, distribution centers, grocery stores, and restaurants all rely on pest management services to ensure a safe product and prevent continuation and disease outbreak. The Utah restaurant industry represents $5.5 billion in projected annual sales and employs over 29,100 people.19 Utah's agriculture and food products industry is worth $21 billion in total economic output and supports over 80,000 jobs.20 Pest management professionals are vital in keeping rodents and cockroaches from contaminating our food and the proposed tax would raise food costs throughout the state.

Hotel/Hospitality Industry

In 2013, 99.6 percent of pest management professionals received bed bug complaints.21 A study showed on average, a single report of bed bugs in traveler reviews lowers the value of a hotel room by $38 and $23 per room per night for business and leisure travelers respectively.22 Increasing the cost of bed bug treatments isn't a recipe for economic growth as it will most likely result in higher lodging prices for tourists and potentially reduce the amount of travel to hotels in our state. Utah's hospitality industry generated $8.17 billion in annual sales and supported 142,500 full and part-time jobs.23

The Pest Management Industry is an Economic Engine

The pest management industry is an invaluable economic engine in the State of Utah, by supporting hundreds of jobs and protecting billions of dollars in economic output and the health of the public in Utah. The pest management industry in Utah is creating jobs and continuing to grow at a rapid pace. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 20 percent increase in job growth for the professional pest management industry from 2012 to 2022, but the proposed sales tax would certainly be an immediate impediment to continued job growth and opportunities. Hardest hit would be local small and family-owned business with five employees or less. These small businesses represent over 75% of the pest management industry in Utah and the compliance costs could not be easily absorbed without obstructing growth, innovation and quality services. Complying with the sales tax will be a burdensome process for our member companies and will restrict our economic freedom.

Conclusion

UPMA appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 441 and taxing the protection of public health and property. The structural pest management industry does an incredible job at protecting public health and property and bolstering Utah’s economy. The Utah Legislature should exempt the structural pest control industry and public health protection from the sales tax on services. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Andrew Richardson
Edge Pest Control
President
Utah Pest Management Association