

TESTIMONY OF  
PENNSYLVANIA MANUFACTURED HOUSING ASSOCIATION  
BEFORE THE  
PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE COMMITTEE  
ON  
HOUSE BILL 1421 – LICENSURE OF HOME INSPECTORS

SEPTEMBER 21, 2016

PRESENTED BY  
MARY GAISKI  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Thank you Chairwoman Harhart, Chairman Readshaw and committee members for the opportunity to express our position regarding the licensing of home inspectors.

The Pennsylvania Manufactured Housing Association (PMHA) is a non-profit trade association representing the factory built housing industry. Our membership consists of the manufacturers who build manufactured and industrialized/modular homes, retailers who sell the homes, installers, suppliers, lenders, community owners and developers.

Pennsylvania is considered a production state and is home to 32 factories that build manufactured and industrialized/modular homes, and distribute them throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states. Manufactured homes are built to the federal Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards Act (HUD Code) and industrialized/modular homes are built to the International Residential Code (IRC) under Pennsylvania's Industrialized Housing Act (IHA). Both programs are regulated by the Housing Standards Division within the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), to assure code officials and consumers alike that manufactured and modular homes are compliant with the federal, state and local codes.

Factory built housing is closed wall construction whether the home is built to the federal HUD Code or under the IHA program. From factory to home site, both have quality assurance programs and approved engineered designs for all aspects of construction. Though the HUD code is a performance code and the IRC is a prescriptive code, it is many times difficult to distinguish between the two products. The biggest distinction is the label that must be affixed to the home prior to leaving the factory. The label assures that the home was built to code. A red label is affixed to the outside of a manufactured home and a gold and silver label is found inside an industrialized/modular home, typically in the cabinet under the kitchen sink. Manufactured homes are required to be built on a steel chassis, though modulares can be as well. We use the same products and materials as site builders.

When tying a manufactured home to the site, all homes must be anchored and protected from frost heave. To assure this is done correctly, the federal HUD code requires all manufacturers to

provide instructions on how to install the home to the building site and Pennsylvania requires all manufactured home installers to be certified and undergo mandatory training every three years. In addition to the installer certification and training, our factories and their sales people along with our retailers and their salespeople are required to be licensed under the Vehicle Licensing Act. Because of this, our industry is no stranger to what H.B. 1421 is trying to create.

Our concern with H.B. 1421 is not with the fact that our homes may be subjected to a home inspection but concern that the person doing the inspection understands that homes are built to varying codes and when identifying material defects, they are doing so with the knowledge of the code the home is built to.

Through the years our office has received numerous calls from consumers and licensed retailers or community owners questioning a report they have received from a home inspector. Many times the confusion is due to misunderstanding the code the home was built to. Recently we were involved in a situation where the home inspector felt there should have been more piers placed under the home for support. The home, which was less than a year old, was installed in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations by a certified installer and sold by a licensed retailer. It also underwent several inspections by the local code inspector to include a final inspection which resulted in a certificate of occupancy. Though the home inspector corrected his report after talking with the manufacturer who confirmed that the home was properly installed, his initial report caused friction between the homeowner and the retailer/community owner responsible for the work. After reading the inspection report, the homeowner accused the retailer of doing shoddy work and questioned their decision to purchase a manufactured home.

It is our position, confusion such as this can be greatly minimized if home inspectors would be required to attend the same training required for the industry, giving them the knowledge and understanding needed to properly inspect a factory built home.

Manufactured homes are the most affordable homeownership option in the market today and we are committed to making sure homebuyers are comfortable with their decision to purchase a

home built in a factory. Home inspections are an important tool in determining the safety and durability of our homes.

So, in closing, please know that we agree with the basic elements of H.B. 1421, we just ask that when setting up the educational requirements for home inspectors, language is added to require licensed home inspectors to be trained on the federal HUD code and the Industrialized Housing Act, to assure home inspectors better understand the codes and processes of factory built housing. This requirement will not only benefit the industry but will benefit the consumers who rely on home inspectors to give them the confidence in the home they are purchasing.

Again, we thank the PA House Professional Licensure Committee for the opportunity to present the manufactured and modular housing industry's position related to the licensing of home inspectors.