

Speaking Points in Support of HB16-1401, the Restaurant Inspection fee bill

Bill Sponsors:

House: Becker K. and Priola

Senate: Woods and Hodge

Committee: Business, Labor & Technology

Members: Heath, Holbert, Jahn, Neville, Tate, Hodge and Woods

Good afternoon as I come before you today to ask for your YES VOTE on HB1401, the Restaurant Inspection fee bill.

This bill is the result of over a year of work by the restaurant association, counties, and public health agencies.

A very significant compromise was reached that is the most significant advancement on this issue in years, everyone got important changes, and no one got everything they wanted. When I was serving in the House this bill came up every years and the stakeholders could never reach a happy medium. I am glad to see that finally all the players could come together and make this bill finally happen.

The fee increase is needed by counties: it has been 7 years since the last increase and local public health agencies are falling behind in timely inspections and plan reviews. Counties have had to put an increasing amount of county general funds in those budgets to try to keep up. So the tax payers are ultimately

paying these fees whether they are going to these establishments or not.

In Jeffco alone, our total food program costs are approximately \$1.3M. Our total food program revenues (including inspection fees) are approximately \$565,000, but we send back about \$85,000 of that to the state health department for their costs. Our general fund pays for approximately 60% of the food program costs, which equates to about \$780,000.

The industry is also getting a number of things they need, with assurance that they will happen, including faster plan reviews and more highly trained inspectors and more uniform/quality inspections across the state. This is very important so the restaurant owner and the consumer can rely on a consistent program.

We also support the new communication system that will be developed to communicate inspection results to the public – a system that will be developed with stakeholder input and will be used in every county across the state, without letter grading, which is still not always the best form of disclosure for all offenses. We ought to have a way to inform the public that is consistent around the state.

In short, this bill is a critical step forward to improving this program which is *essential to the public health of all citizen in Colorado.*

Please VOTE YES on HB16-1401