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W. S. Riggins Jr., MD, MPH, WCCHD Executive Director/Health Authority

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29 August 2011

Ms. Judith McGeary, Esq.  
Executive Director, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance  
P.O. Box 809  
Cameron, Texas 76520

Dear Ms. McGeary:

Thank you for your email and letter expressing concerns about this agency's position on SB 81. I am aware of the email that was sent by Ms. Kathryn Kelley in our Food Safety Division. Her email was in answer to a question which required interpretation of SB 81 and was based on her personal ideas concerning the interpretation of this new law. Please disregard her response, as it does not reflect the position of the Williamson County and Cities Health District and accept my apologies for any confusion caused by Ms. Kelley's email. The Williamson County and Cities Health District has not adopted any official position in relation to the interpretation of SB 81, and it is not the intent of Williamson County and Cities Health District to have a position on the bill, at least until interpretive guidance is provided by the State.

Our local agency depends on the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and other state agencies to provide programmatic guidance on the implementation and meaning of new state statutes and regulations. I hope that DSHS will be providing clarification through rules and guidelines soon, and I encourage you to provide feedback directly to them to ensure that the changes in the Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER) address your concerns. Through the Williamson County Food Order and our various city food ordinances, our board of health and city councils adopted the TFER by reference. Consistent interpretation and implementation is vital to fulfill the intent of any statute, and through our board we fully intend to meet the provisions of this bill.

Our mission statement is "To protect and promote the health of our citizens," and is prefaced by "in partnership with our communities;" and it is not to deprive citizens of their rights in respect to this or any state statute. I hope I have addressed your concerns in this matter.

Sincerely,

W.S. Riggins Jr. MD, MPH  
Executive Director, Health Authority  
Williamson County and Cities Health District

Representative Lois Kolkhorst  
Senator Jane Nelson  
Representative Charles Schwertner  
Kerry Russell, Chair WCCHD Board of Health