

Environment Committee
Public Hearing – Monday March 8, 2010

Raised Bill No. 126

AN ACT ADDING WOOD SMOKE TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH NUISANCE CODE AND CONCERNING OUTDOOR WOOD-BURNING FURNACES.

Dear members of the Environment Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to testify today and speak against Bill No. 126 concerning outdoor wood burning furnaces.

My name is Carlo Guerra and I live in the town of Lebanon. I recently purchased an outdoor wood burning furnace and had it installed in my back yard to heat my house and hot water. I grew up in New York and if anyone would have told me that I would be burning wood to heat my house and hot water I would have told them that they were nuts. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would be cutting wood, splitting wood, stacking wood and then burning wood, especially in an outdoor wood furnace.

The reason we purchased an outdoor wood furnace is due to the fact that my wife got laid off about 3 years ago and I was the only income for our household. The oil prices were going through the roof and we realized that we had to come up with some alternative means to heat our home. My wife and I did some research and considered many different options that were available to us. After speaking to many different people and narrowing down our choices we came up with our outdoor wood furnace. We figured we lived in Lebanon which is a country town and the wood out there is high in abundance. We took out a 5 year loan making the payments on the stove affordable and I was able to get most of the wood for free. In fact I am on a so called "Wood List" with the town of Lebanon where they deliver wood to my house from trees that either have fallen across the road or were some type of hazard to the community.

If these wood burning furnaces are used in the manner that they were designed to work, the smoke that comes out of the chimney is no more than that which comes out of a chimney from the wood stoves that are inside people's homes. I have driven by houses and have seen sometimes more smoke come out of a house chimney than that which comes out of my outdoor wood burning furnace. If anything we should enforce the requirements that are already in place for the outdoor wood burning furnaces and make sure that people use them in accordance with these regulations. When I had my outdoor wood furnace installed, I pulled a permit, made sure that the stove was placed on my property in accordance with the guidelines and installed the required amount of chimney stacks that were mandated. I believe a lot of the concerns are coming from people who reside next to home owners that misuse the devices and that we should take steps to enforce the regulations that are already in place.

Burning wood in these devices is being endorsed by the federal government, in fact they are offering federal tax exemptions for buying these devices. Let's not punish everyone for the few that misuse these devices! Let's address this problem by enforcing the regulations that are in place and make sure the people that misuse these devices are held accountable.