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State Emergency Response Commission

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Before Sunset Review Committee

March 1, 2016

Good afternoon, Chairman Jordan, Vice Chairman Brown and members of the Ohio Sunset Review Committee, my name is Cindy Dewulf and I am the Assistant Chief of the Division of Air Pollution Control at Ohio EPA. I am here today to encourage the continuation of the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC), to which our agency provides both administrative and technical support.

In 1986, following an industrial accident in India, Congress enacted the Federal Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act also known as the EPCRA law, which requires regulated industries to provide annual information about the hazardous materials stored on their property. Under this federal law, each state was required to create a SERC to collect this information and coordinate its dissemination to local emergency planning committees (LEPC) that use it to create county level emergency response plans. To comply with this federal mandate, the Ohio SERC was first created by Governor's Executive Order in 1987 and then in 1988 when the Ohio General Assembly formally established it and outlined its administration and implementation of requirements in ORC Chapter 3750.

SERC is comprised of nineteen members: nine state agency representatives and ten members appointed by the Governor that represent local government, fire fighters/fire chiefs, the chemical/petroleum industry, environmental advocacy groups and LEPC's. Ohio's 87 LEPCs are established at the county level and membership of these local committees is appointed by

SERC. SERC also approves the emergency plans that LEPC's are required by law to prepare, and ensures that they conduct annual exercises of those plans. In addition to this, SERC collects the annual chemical inventory information and associated filing fees, which are used to make grants to the county LEPCs to support their planning and exercise activities.

SERC is co-chaired by Ohio EPA and the Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS), which divide the duties of the Commission. DPS through the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (OEMA) oversees the emergency planning and exercise functions, while Ohio EPA handles the collection and distribution of chemical information and finances. In addition to OEMA and Ohio EPA, the State Fire Marshal also participates heavily in SERC by incorporating training into its academy curriculum on how to respond to fires or spills involving hazardous materials.

As you have heard in my testimony today, the Ohio SERC plays a very crucial role in supporting local communities on their emergency planning and preparedness and by continuing to raise public awareness of chemical hazards within our state. With this in mind, I both recommend and encourage the reauthorization of Ohio's SERC. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony and I am happy to answer any questions.