

Agriculture and Rural Development Committee

77 S. High St

13th Floor

Columbus, OH 43215

Phone (614) 644-6034

Fax (614) 719-6988

December 21, 2017

Dear Agriculture and Rural Development Committee members,

Slide 1

I'm writing in support of House Bill 175, which would allow our family to have small farm animals on our private property. For me this bill provides self-sufficiency, healthy food options, mental and physical well-being and life skills that I can pass down to my kids through suburban farming.

I have lived in Pierce Township located in southwestern Clermont County, Ohio for almost 25 years. Pierce Township has evolved from a rural farming community into a primarily residential community. Families who live in Pierce Township value its rural atmosphere such as the greenspace and numerous wildlife (deer, turkey, waterfowl, coyote, etc.) as well as the close access to urban environments such as the City of Cincinnati.

My home is a single-family residence (1.07 acres) in a low density residential area adjacent to three single-family lots (ranging from 1-5 acres) and 10 acres of undeveloped land on a hillside. It falls outside the existing sewer infrastructure, so there is even more of a countryside feel to our immediate neighborhood.

Slide 2

Per zoning regulations, I am currently allowed only 4 chickens and 4 rabbits on my property with a permit but no additional farm animals regardless of the amount of land I own. I grew up on a farm. I understand the difference between agriculture and providing food for your family. I want my children to have similar learning opportunities that I had as a child. I want my kids to learn to become more independent and have a similar work ethic that comes from raising our food. Children should know where their food comes from (not from the store) and how to care for animals...what sacrifices are made for their food and how to clean, cook and preserve their food. Families should have the ability to raise their food and not have to choose between high priced organic foods or processed foods that are only available for purchase. A suburban farming environment is the perfect blend of healthy food options and responsibility and learning experiences for my children, all within the conveniences and proximity to work and the cities.

People of all ages can benefit physically and mentally from keeping chickens or other small farm animals. In fact, studies have shown that caring for chickens can relieve stress, calm the mind and even ease the symptoms of depression. We have had chickens for a couple of years now. The daily routine of caring for our chickens gets us outside into the fresh air every day away from the electronic devices. For children on the autism spectrum, chickens have shown to increase social and play skills, enhance conversation abilities, and promote self-care and independent living skills through simple daily chores such as collecting eggs. Cleaning out the coop and the nesting boxings on a routine basis gives my youngest son the opportunity to earn some money which in turn provides the opportunity to learn about fiscal responsibility.

We are a family of five that consumes 2-4 dozen eggs per week. A realistic production rate for the average chicken is about 4 eggs/week. Four chickens simply cannot provide enough eggs for our family's needs. In addition to the fabulous nutritional value of freshly laid eggs, there are other reasons to have chickens. We have reduced our food waste by feeding our leftovers to the chickens. Most people don't know that chickens are omnivores and will eat almost anything. Even the chicken waste provides fertilizer that can easily be composted to use in our garden. Their egg shells can also be used in the garden or feed to the chickens as a good source of calcium. * It is the ultimate example of recycling. Chickens also offer natural pest control to harmful insects like ticks, if allowed to free range. Unfortunately, our township zoning does not allow this without fencing in our yard even though we are adjacent to 10 acres of undeveloped land.

* A single chicken can "bio-recycle" ~7 lbs of food residuals/month. If 2,000 households raise 3 hens, it could divert 252 tons of waste from landfills annually.¹

The rationale behind zoning is that it promotes the good of the entire community in accordance with a comprehensive plan. Unfortunately, even the regulations in some urban areas are less restrictive towards small farm animals than my current township zoning regulations. House Bill 175 is a much more sensible way to promote well-being for all Ohio property owners. A family of five could provide for enough food for their family for sustainable living with the passing of this bill as the number of small farm animals is restricted by the amount of property owned. I believe every property owner should have the right to use their land for healthy living without interference from zoning restrictions. Please consider supporting State Representative Tom E. Brinkman, Jr. in his efforts to pass House Bill 175.

Sincerely,



Amy Weiskittel
3361 Merwin Ten Mile Rd.
New Richmond, Ohio 45157 State Representative
513-520-9819

Cc: State Representative Tom E. Brinkman, Jr.
State Representative Doug Green

Pierce Township, Ohio



Amy Weiskittel letter dated 12/21/2017

House Bill 175 supports

- Self-sufficiency
- Healthy Food Options
- Mental and Physical well-being
- Life Skills

Pierce Township Zoning

- 4 chickens
- 4 rabbits

Life Lessons for Children

- Where food comes from (not from a store)
- How to raise food and care for animals
 - Better choices than processed or high priced organic foods
- What sacrifices are made
- How to clean, cook and preserve their food

Mental and Physical Well-Being

- Help with stress and depression
- Gets us outside away from electronics
 - Daily chores (collecting eggs, cleaning coop, etc.)
 - Can help with autism
 - Increase in social and play skills
 - Enhance conversation abilities
 - Promotes self-care and independent living skills
 - Fiscal responsibility



Family of Five

- We consume 2-4 dozen eggs per week
- Realistic egg production is 16 eggs per week



Chickens

- Fresh eggs (better nutritional value)
- Ultimate in recycling
 - Reduction in food waste
 - A single chicken can "bio-recycle" ~7 lbs of food residuals/month
 - If 2,000 households raise 3 hens, it could divert 252 tons of waste from landfills annually.¹
 - Fertilizer for garden
- Natural pest control



House Bill 175

- Sensible way for ALL Ohioans
- Based on amount of property owned
 - My township zoning more restrictive than urban areas (i.e. San Diego up to 25 chickens depending on property size)



1. Patrician Foreman, author of *City Chicks: Keeping Micro-flocks of Chickens as Garden Helpers, Compost Makers, Bio-recyclers, and Local Food Producers* (Good Earth Publications, 2010). <https://www.rodalorganiclif.com/garden/5-reasons-you-should-consider-raising-backyard-chickens/slide/1>