

Joint Meeting of the Senate Agriculture Committee  
and the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee

Testimony by Christopher Henney  
Ohio AgriBusiness Association

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Chairman Hackett, Chairman Hill, Vice Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chairman Koehler, Ranking Member O'Brien, Ranking Member Patterson, and distinguished members of this committee; thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

I am Chris Henney, and I serve as the president and CEO for the Ohio AgriBusiness Association. OABA is a trade association that represents companies that provide services and supplies to Ohio's farmers. Our membership includes Ohio's fertilizer industry, along with the grain, feed, seed and crop protection industries. We are affiliated with, and supportive of, The Fertilizer Institute and the Agricultural Retailers Association at the national level, the International Plant Nutrition Institute at the international level, and we administer the Certified Crop Adviser program locally in Ohio. We also administer the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program in Ohio and portions of Indiana and Michigan.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today on Senate Bill 1 of the 131<sup>st</sup> General Assembly. OABA was active in the legislative process, working with House and Senate members during the crafting of the bill and, ultimately, supporting its passage. I will share feedback on the legislation in a few minutes, but first I want to emphasize how very proud we are of the efforts and leadership displayed by our membership around nutrient management. OABA and our members have been proactively engaged on this issue since the summer of 2011. In March of 2014, five months prior to the Toledo water crisis, OABA, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, state and national non-government organizations, academic institutions, and government entities, launched the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program with a goal of reducing nutrient run-off to improve water quality.

- The voluntary program provides guidelines and independently certifies nutrient service providers, also known as agricultural retailers, on their adoption of proven best practices through the 4Rs, which refers to using the Right Source of nutrients at the Right Rate and Right Time in the Right Place.
- Since 2014, 47 ag retail facilities have been certified, 37 of which are in the Western Lake Erie watershed.
- Certified agricultural retailers work with over 6,000 farmers in Ohio covering 2.89 million acres of farmland. Of that, 1.9 million acres are located in the Western Lake Erie Basin, nearly half of the farmable land there.

According to a 2017 report by OSU's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences titled "4R Nutrient Stewardship in the Western Lake Erie Basin," certified agricultural retailers play an instrumental role in helping farmer customers meet regulatory requirements, such as SB 1.

As I speak with our members on the impacts of SB 1, I continually hear them say it has raised awareness of the importance of being diligent in their nutrient management efforts, reinforced the messages they share with their employees and farmer customers and has driven innovation in fertilizer application. Our member companies provide services to farmers to help them adopt proactive nutrient management practices, such as precision farming, conservation tillage and management planning.

According to a recent report by the Partnership for Ag Resource Management (PARM), over the past six years, Ohio agricultural retailers in the Western Lake Erie Basin have substantially increased sales of products and services that keep soil and nutrients on farm fields. PARM estimates that in 2017, more than 1.5 million pounds of total phosphorus was retained on farm fields, and out of Ohio waterways. Sales of variable rate technology (VRT) alone reduced phosphorus losses by more than 600,000 pounds. VRT involves intensive soil sampling within fields, and placement of phosphorus only where needed and at the optimum rate. This ensures that nutrients will be taken up by the crop.

Greater awareness and evolving technologies are allowing for reductions in fertilizer use. The 2015 Soil Test Summary Book compiled by the International Plant Nutrition Institute shows that soil test phosphorus levels are declining. More specifically, high soil test phosphorus levels are declining, an indication that phosphorus resources are being better allocated. According to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, since 1980, Ohio has produced 19 percent more total corn using 32 percent less total nutrients per bushel. Today's farmers are using 41 percent less nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium than they were in 1980.

In closing, I'll share that I read the articles online calling for the legislature to do more, but I appreciate that this body is interested in reviewing existing legislation and working with the agricultural community before moving forward on any new measures. I hope you know just how serious our members and the farmers they serve are about being good stewards of our natural resources.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide input on SB 1 and an overview of the advances our members have made in nutrient management. Thank you for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions.