Testimony on Senate Bill 1 (131st GA) Implementation
Ohio House and Senate Agriculture Committees
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&
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Chair Hill, Ranking Member Patterson, Chair Hackett, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the House and Senate Agriculture committees, thank you for the opportunity to review the implementation of Senate Bill 1 from the 131st General Assembly.

We are here today on behalf of the Ohio Corn and Wheat Growers Association (OCWGA) and the Ohio Soybean Association (OSA). We are member-driven, grassroots organizations dedicated to providing leadership and advocating for sound public policy at the state and national levels for Ohio's grain farmers. Together, we represent the interests of over 24,000 grain farmers throughout the state.

Senate Bill 1 is an example of how Ohio's farming community, the legislature, and the administration have worked together to adopt policies based on best conservation management practices vetted through the scientific method. We have worked together to ensure that the 4Rs of nutrient management stand as the foundation for progress on how fertilizer and manure are applied to farm fields. We were proud to support the practical and scientifically sound solutions to nutrient application that are addressed in Senate Bill 1, and appreciate that the work done on this bill was done in partnership with Ohio's farming community.

Today, we would like to present brief overviews of two farmers who have taken the spirit of Senate Bill 1 to heart on their own farms.

Mark Drewes and his oldest son, Tyler, live and farm in Custar, Ohio – a small farming community in Wood County. His family has been farming the soil of the Great Black Swamp since the 1880's. They recognize, every day, the immense responsibility they have to care for the environment. When asked about what his family has done to adopt conservation management on their farm, Mark says, "We started our conservation efforts 30-years ago by installing filter strips along creeks and ditches so that fertilizer and chemicals could not runoff into the waterways. We also thought we did a great job in the 1990's of saving Lake Erie by switching many acres of farmland to no-till or conservation tillage practices. We also have installed 36 water control structures to control the flow of water out of our field drainage tiles. I have committed one farm to the edge-of-field studies being conducted by The Ohio State University and the United States Department of Agriculture to monitor actual nitrate and

phosphorus runoff from field tile and surface water. We are learning much from that great project."

Andy Stickel, a third-generation farmer in Northwest Ohio, has always been mindful of the value and importance of preserving water quality in the Western Lake Erie Basin. Andy and his brother raise corn, soybeans, and wheat using primarily no-till practices on the family farm 20 miles south of Toledo. It is important for them to be good stewards and they do this by minimizing phosphorus and potassium applications and using nutrients on a field-by field prescription basis. The Stickels band-apply fertilizer in corn and soybeans, which gets the fertilizer under the soil surface, minimizing runoff. They have primarily heavy clay soils and use stabilizers, especially with phosphorus applications. Corn is planted in 30-inch rows between the fertilizer bands and soybeans are planted in 15-inch rows right next to the bands. Andy has said that banding helps their bottom line and efficiency. They also use cover crops to improve soil health and water quality.

We, and the farmers we represent, understand the importance of water quality in relation to agricultural production. For many years, we have actively engaged industry stakeholders and farmers about the problems facing Ohio's lakes and have spearheaded research and invested millions of farmer dollars to help understand how nutrients leave the farm field.

One of these research projects is *On-Field Ohio!,* which provides the data and scientific basis needed to rewrite the Ohio Phosphorus Index that is intended to provide a field-scale estimate of phosphorus runoff risk based on characteristics (such as degree of slope or soil type) and crop management practices (current phosphorus levels, fertilizer applied, application method and tillage). This research has been supported by checkoff funding from the Ohio Soybean Council, Ohio Corn Marketing Program, Ohio Small Grains Marketing Program, along with funding from the Ohio Farm Bureau, USDA and many others.

We have also invested in extensive on-farm strip trials across the state to update row-crop fertilizer recommendations, known as the Tri-State Fertilizer Recommendations. Over the past 4 years, over 140 trials have been conducted to evaluate crop response to phosphorus, nitrogen, potassium, and sulfur fertilization. Current data suggests keeping phosphorus levels within the Tri-state recommendations has been proven to keep dissolved phosphorus concentrations low.

Moving forward, we would like to see this theme of collaboration on policy continued. We look forward to working with the General Assembly, this, and future administrations, on a comprehensive approach to looking at all variables and sources to find long-term solutions that work.

On behalf of OCWGA and OSA, thank you for allowing us to testify today and we would be happy to answer any questions.