

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMBINED
OHIO HOUSE AND SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEES**

Submitted June 4, 2018

Chairman Hill & Chairman Hackett, esteemed members of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding a review of Senate Bill 1 (SB 1).

I am here to speak on behalf of Ohio's major livestock organizations, the Ohio Cattlemen's Association, the Ohio Poultry Association, the Ohio Dairy Producers Association, the Ohio Sheep Improvement Association and the Ohio Pork Council. Combined, these organizations represent more than 30,000 livestock farms around the state. As many of you are aware, Ohio has a fantastic history of raising livestock that has benefited not only Ohio but the country. From the original settlements of Marietta, Ohio, in 1788 to today, livestock have been an integral part of our state.

Ohio currently ranks number one in swiss cheese production, top three in eggs, fifth in the number of milk processing plants, seventh in pork production, ninth in turkey production, eleventh in milk production, twelfth in sheep production and sixteenth in broiler chickens and beef farms. Equally important to know, there is at least one sheep farm and one beef farm in every county in Ohio. While we have much to be proud of, I share these figures with you to help you understand our long and storied history in Ohio, because to know our history is to know the challenges that our members have overcome throughout the centuries.

Today one of our greatest challenges – not only in the Western Lake Erie Basin, but across the state – is water quality. Yet, as they always have, Ohio’s livestock and poultry farmers are rising to the occasion and working hard to solve an issue that many scientists will admit we still don’t fully understand. For decades, our farm community has been working to better manage the nutrients that leave our fields through runoff. While this most recent challenge has accelerated these efforts, our focus has remained on identifying and implementing common-sense solutions.

When we first began to address this topic, the Ohio Cattlemen’s Association, Ohio Poultry Association, the Ohio Pork Council, the Ohio Sheep Improvement Association and the Ohio Dairy Producers Association worked to develop provisions that later became part of Senate Bill 1, because it was a common-sense approach to a daunting challenge. Our farmer boards agreed to engage in a statewide legislative effort because they believed it would have a positive impact on water quality - even knowing the difficulties it could create for some of our members.

At the time of this discussion we, as livestock groups, had two major concerns. Our first was that our members were going to require additional storage and equipment to be compliant. Second, we feared that agreeing to this approach would create a situation where the public would believe doing so would lead to instantaneous changes in the lake. While each of these concerns held true, we have also learned the following:

1. SB 1 includes a time constraint for application that has put a heavy burden on farmers as well as custom applicators. This has raised awareness of a significant need for additional custom applicators able to help apply nutrients when weather permits.

2. At the same time, this constraint has forced farmers to look for new and innovative ways to apply nutrients. This includes expanded use of cover-crops, as well as the funding of research through Ohio State University Extension for new manure application equipment that would allow manure to be applied to a growing corn crop. Yet more must be done in this area to allow for expanded time frames for application of nutrients as Ohio experiences more significant rain events.
3. Access to financial resources for manure storage and application equipment has been a significant issue for farmers. While more than 80 farms were granted temporary exemptions across the Western Lake Erie Basin, all of those exemptions have now expired. Yet many individuals are still working with NRCS to apply for EQUIP funding to expand these structures and purchase equipment. There simply is not enough funding currently available to meet all livestock farmer's needs.
4. SB 1 has created new record-keeping requirements that, while not overly burdensome, have created challenges for farmers. New software applications have been created to help with this, but there is still a lot that needs to be done to streamline the amount of paperwork required to be protected under SB 1.
5. During initial discussions on this bill, some advocated for additional enforcement, claiming that a complaint-driven approach would not work. We now know that it does work – over the last few years, as members of the public became aware of the new regulations, many individuals across the Western Lake Erie Basin called in with concerns. A few of these calls resulted in non-compliance issues, though many instead allowed for an educational moment for the public to better understand livestock agriculture.
6. We now know that farmers have done a better job of reducing phosphorus in their soils than was projected. As the Ohio Livestock Coalition report submitted shows, 62.5 percent of soil samples

between 1993 and 2015 showed a significant decrease in soil test P. Additionally we know that only 1.14 percent of soil samples are above 71ppm P.

7. Ohio's livestock groups have been at the forefront of this discussion for years and has done a great deal to improve water quality. Many have claimed that the voluntary measures we have taken over the years are not enough, but our groups believe that is because they don't fully understand all that our organizations and our members have done, including:
 - a. Conducting hundreds of hours of trainings on new nutrient application laws and regulations.
 - b. Creating a siting assessment to ensure certain environmental concerns are being addressed prior to new swine facilities being built.
 - c. Partnering with OSU Extension to develop new nutrient application equipment.
 - d. Re-deploying the Ohio Livestock Coalition's Livestock Environmental Assurance Program to provide farmers and the public with a centralized resource for all environmental questions.
 - e. Establishing a discounted soil testing program for certain farmers to have access to inexpensive soil and manure testing.

Working together, our farmers have achieved all of this, while also investing millions of dollars over the last three years to purchase new equipment and build additional storage. This has allowed us to affirm our ongoing commitment to farming responsibly and to being good stewards of Ohio's land, air and waterways.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your time and look forward to your questions.