

**Ohio House Finance Committee  
House Bill 643  
Proponent Testimony  
May 22, 2018**

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Ohio Cattlemen's Association, Ohio Dairy Producers Association, Ohio Poultry Association and Ohio Pork Council, thank you for the opportunity to present the following testimony on House Bill 643. We would also like to thank Representative Arndt and Representative Patterson for all their efforts to bring this bill forward.

For years, Ohio farmers have worked diligently to reduce their potential impact on the environment - both for today, and generations to come. Through the use of innovative methods on the farm, and best management practices, farmers continue to work toward improvement and protection of our state's valuable resources, including Lake Erie. House Bill 643 would ensure that farmers can continue to use and improve these necessary practices.

While Ohio livestock and poultry farmers recognize that the condition of Lake Erie is unacceptable, they continue to work toward improvement, and embrace the opportunity to be a part of a solution. For example, livestock and poultry organizations demonstrated their ability to educate farmers on the regulations required in Senate Bill 1, which restricts nutrient application in the Western Lake Erie Basin during certain weather conditions. In addition, livestock and poultry organizations support the ongoing effort to certify farmers through Senate Bill 150, which has certified nearly 19,000 Ohio farmers on appropriate nutrient application.

It is important to note that there is much about the health of Lake Erie that livestock and poultry farmers are unaware, and thus cannot make recommendations. As previously stated, our organizations fully support research to better understand Lake Erie and the impact of agriculture.

House Bill 643 is a tremendous step forward in the health of Lake Erie. If enacted, HB 643 will supply farmers with the resources needed to be successful on the farm, while protecting Lake Erie. Additionally, House Bill 643 will provide the necessary resources for researchers in the state to conduct pertinent studies regarding the health of Lake Erie. Ohio livestock and poultry farmers appreciate, and support, the approach of this legislation to direct resources towards scientific research to better understand the issues associated with Lake Erie. Continued support of Sea Grant-Stone Laboratory and promotion of helpful technologies and methods, such as soil testing or enhanced filter strips, will ensure that farmers will be able to continue their necessary practices.

We admire the targeted approach in this legislation, which prioritizes assistance to sub-watersheds that have the highest total phosphorus and dissolved reactive phosphorus loading. We look forward to being a part of the legislative process to ensure that this is done in a scientifically, sound manner with input from stakeholders.

As advocates of agriculture, we recognize the importance of utilizing the appropriate equipment to reduce phosphorus loss. Technology like subsurface placement, utilization of graphic information systems data for placement, and variable rate technology are tremendous

advancements that will benefit farmers and water quality for years to come. Still, we recognize that the expense of this equipment can be a limiting factor, especially when some may have limited economic benefits. While the science will continue to evolve and become more accurate as the research continues, the practices and equipment identified will help farmers to reduce their phosphorus runoff. Farmers look to research, like edge of field monitoring, to ensure that they are doing what is necessary to protect the land and preserve our resources. House Bill 643 would ensure that this alliance can continue.

In addition, we are thankful for the support of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the Western Lake Erie Basin, as these personnel are effectively working with farmers to implement conservation practices and to provide technical assistance. If more resources were provided, it would allow for greater collaboration between farmers and their respective Soil and Water Conservation District, ultimately leading to a positive impact across the state.

On behalf of Ohio livestock and poultry farmers, we thank you once again for allowing us to present this testimony on House Bill 643.

Sincerely,



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