

Ways and Means Committee

S.B. 36

Proponent Testimony

March 1st, 2017



Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying today on behalf of the membership of the Ohio Conservation Federation. We represent tens of thousands of sportsmen and women across Ohio. Our membership includes **Buckeye Big Buck Club, Ducks Unlimited, Ohio State Trappers Association, Pheasants Forever, National Wildlife Federation, National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Ruffed Grouse Society.**

Ohio landowners -- including hunters, anglers, trappers, farmers, and ranchers -- are concerned about tax evaluation under the Current Agricultural Use Value (CAUV) for lands enrolled in habitat conservation practices.

State, Federal and local conservation programs like the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Agricultural Lands Easement Program, and the Clean Ohio Program benefit all Ohioans through reduced soil erosion, flood control, improved water quality, and increased wildlife habitat. In return, fixed payments are made to compensate owners for the cost of planting trees and grasses, establishing riparian buffers, and restoring wetlands. When land is enrolled in these programs, owners forfeit the ability to generate income from crop production on those acres for minimum periods of 10 years, 15 years, or in some cases perpetuity.

*But, why would any landowner want to install conservation practices like riparian areas, restore wetlands, or keep a woodlot intact if taxes keep going up on lands that provide no, very little income?*

Excluding conservation acreage from CAUV while assessing it at anything higher than minimum value, not only burdens current landowners, but also threatens future participation in these vital conservation programs. We are encouraged that some county auditors recognize that these conservation practices contribute to a healthy environment, populace, and economy and therefore assess them at their current minimum value.

***We support the language in S.B. 36 that states that lands in conservation practices be assessed at the lowest CAUV rate.***

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your staff to discuss these issues in more detail.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Matt*

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