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**TESTIMONY OF OHIO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE DIRECTOR DOROTHY PELANDA TO HOUSE  
AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE  
MARCH 19, 2019**

Chairman Koehler, Vice-Chair Smith, Ranking Member Brent and members of the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee, thank you for inviting me to share more information with you about the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

In my time serving in the Ohio House of Representatives, I was pleased to serve on this very committee and I know the important work that you will be doing over the next two years in considering a wide array of issues that will come before you.

We have a beautiful campus in Reynoldsburg home to ten buildings. Many people do not know that behind these brick buildings hosts a flurry of scientific and consumer protection activity. In fact, it is the top comprehensive consumer protection lab safety network in the state, and one of only a few of its kind in the nation. ODA administers numerous regulatory, food safety, consumer protection, plant health and animal care programs for the benefit of all Ohioans. The department also provides leadership for Ohio's No. 1 industry – food and agriculture – to create greater economic opportunity for Ohio's farmers and processors and to preserve and enhance Ohio's bountiful resources. We do all of that with a staff of approximately 450 and by operating on a budget that represents a very small fraction of the state's overall budget.

### **Protecting Consumers**

ODA's consumer protection duties span far and wide and are some of the most critical overall functions performed by the department. The meal you ate with your family last evening was safe because of the work of ODA inspectors and scientists working behind the scenes to make sure your food is safe. The Consumer Protection Laboratory analyzes samples originating in the food chain – from the farm, through processing and distribution, to the retail level. Our experts test food, feeds, fertilizers, pesticides and animal exhibition and race track samples. A special thank you to the Controlling Board for our new equipment to test the race track samples.

ODA's Meat Inspection Division is the largest division at the department and makes sure that every single animal at slaughter is safe to enter the food supply. Dairy inspectors regulate on-farm production, as well as milk haulers and dairy processors to ensure compliance with federal Grade A milk rules. Ohio ranks 11th in milk production in the United States, producing more than 5.1 billion pounds of milk in 2011. Food Safety inspectors make sure food produced at manufacturers and wholesale operations, such as bakeries, canneries, snack food and candy manufacturers, water and soft drink bottlers, seafood processors and food warehouses are produced according to stringent safety guidelines. They also make sure foods are safe by testing for bacteria like Listeria and E. coli just to name a few. Not all our consumer protection functions are related to food. Our Weights & Measures Division helps to ensure equity in the marketplace by administering and enforcing laws that make sure a pound is a pound and a gallon is a gallon all over the state. Additionally, Amusement Ride Safety inspectors uphold the safety and regulation of all Ohio rides, evaluating everything from the structural safety and warning signs to general ride operations.



## **Safeguarding Plants and Animals**

Securing the health and disease-free status of the state's plants, crops, livestock and other animals is a critical function of the department. Plant Health is the second largest division and it has four core responsibilities:

- Supports Ohio's green industry by managing invasive species that pose a threat to trees, crops and other plants such as the Gypsy Moth and the Asian Longhorned Beetle.
- Regulates commodity haulers and grain elevators and verifies label claims made on feed and seed packaging.
- In addition to licensing nearly 30,000 pesticide applicators, this area implements the Fertilizer Certification program, and regulates the use and distribution of pesticides and the manufacturing and distribution of fertilizer, lime, and agricultural additives.
- Ohio Plant Diagnostic Network – Partnership with OSU and other research entities that handles viral, bacterial, fungal and nematode pathogens, as well as insect pests.

Animal Health is responsible for animal disease management and many animal care regulations in Ohio: We license livestock dealers, renderers, raw rendering collectors and garbage feeders; regulate livestock shows at county and independent fairs; and dangerous wild animal owners and high-volume dog breeders. The Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory provides support for disease control programs and services for veterinarians, livestock producers and agribusinesses, and performs nearly half a million tests annually.

## **Conserving Resources**

Governor DeWine has made it clear that water quality is a priority for this administration. Our department, along with our sister agencies, ODNR and Ohio EPA are working together to find solutions and improve Ohio's water. Our Soil and Water Conservation Division works with 88 local soil and water conservation district offices to educate about best practices and investigate Ohio's small and medium-sized farms when necessary. Likewise, Livestock Environmental Permitting inspectors regulate 250 of Ohio's largest livestock and poultry farms. Inspectors and engineers ensure the farms follow science-based guidelines for managing manure, mortalities, flies, rodents and other pests.

## **Promoting Agriculture**

Agriculture in Ohio is strong and we continue to do our part to help the industry grow. ODA pays homage to Ohio's oldest family farms through the Ohio Historic Family Farms program. Since the state's Farmland Preservation Program began in 1998, more than 50,000 acres of farmland has been preserved for future generations. Ohio Proud promotes nearly 500 Ohio food and agricultural companies whose products are at least 50 percent made or processed in Ohio. The Ohio Grape Industries Committee supports Ohio's more than 350 wineries and the state's marketing program to highlight the state's fast-growing wine growing and production industry.

Chairman Koehler and members of the committee, I would welcome you to tour our campus at any time and allow our team and myself the opportunity to show you the great work we do every day. Thank you for your time and I look forward to taking any questions you might have. Thank you.

