

The Ohio State University
College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences
House of Representatives Agriculture and Rural Development Committee
Gary Pierzynski, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education
May 29, 2019

Chairman Koehler, Vice Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Brent and members of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to testify as a proponent on Senate Bill 57. I am Gary Pierzynski, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education for The Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES). We are the cornerstone college with three campuses (Columbus, Wooster, and statewide) and three missions (research, teaching, and extension) all dedicated to one essential purpose: We sustain life.

We support the provisions of Senate Bill 57 that allow Universities to work with the Ohio Department of Agriculture to begin research on the production of hemp as soon as possible. Adding an emergency clause to the bill could potentially enable CFAES to begin research as early as this growing season. We currently have faculty and staff that are planning to move quickly once the bill is passed.

The Ohio State University is working diligently to meet the needs of all of our industries in Ohio. Over the past couple years, Dr. Cathann Kress, Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Dean of CFAES has traveled the state visiting businesses and county fairs. She has consistently heard the need for strong partnerships between CFAES and its stakeholders to meet the demands of a rapidly changing industry.

In October 2018, a member of our faculty and staff visited two facilities near Lexington, Kentucky for an overview of that state's work in hemp plant production and processing. The first facility was GenCanna, which contracts with farmers to grow hemp, and the second was CannaTrait, a small family farm that grows 20-40 acres of hemp. Both companies harvest the plants and then processes them to extract CBD oil. These farm visits highlighted current challenges, including a limited understanding of optimal agronomic practices, labor intensive planting and harvesting, and a lack of uses for the woody byproduct.

As a leader in agricultural research, Ohio State has the faculty and facilities to address these challenges to improve the profitability of hemp production. Researchers and Extension field specialists can conduct controlled field and on-farm experiments to identify best practices for crop production, from nutrients to weed control to crop rotations. Others could focus on hemp germplasm improvements that would allow for planting seeds rather than hand-planting transplants. CFAES also has expertise in material characterization and processing, which will help in developing new uses for hemp fibers as well as byproducts. For example, we have worked with an industry partner to develop plastics reinforced with plant fibers; hemp fibers could be a good alternative.

Also critical to hemp production is education. OSU Extension is experienced in providing certifications, credentialing, and workshops for farmers, community leaders, and the public. CFAES 4-year and 2-year degrees focus on preparation of current and future farmers, scientists and leaders.

Many Ohio State faculty have collaborative relationships with research and Extension faculty from other land grant universities. We recently hosted faculty from Cornell University in New York in order to gather information from another member of the land grant system. Combining efforts with other institutions can enhance both research and education efforts. The addition of hemp as a commodity crop in Ohio gives farmers one more choice and the potential to increase a farm's profitability. OSU has the faculty, laboratories, and farm fields that can help accelerate the adoption of this new industry.

We also support the provision in the bill that creates a hemp marketing program in the Ohio Revised Code. One of the biggest obstacles that the university faces is funding for research needed to aid agricultural sectors in Ohio. Currently, CFAES maintains the strongest research and extension relationships with marketing programs that engage faculty and discuss the challenges facing their crop or livestock herd. By creating a marketing program, like the soybean or grape program, we can ensure the industry will have a self-governed fund to help address research and extension needs. This would be eligible to fund and could pay for direct costs associated with the research and extension activities. Indirect costs such as personnel would still be part of the costs associated with the OARDC and Cooperative Extension line items in the Ohio Department of Higher Education budget.

We'd like to thank the sponsors, the Senate, and members of this committee for their hard work on Senate Bill 57. Thank you Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions.