



Ohio House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee

HB 183 Proponent Testimony, October 29, 2019

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Chairman Koehler, Vice Chair Smith and Ranking member Brent, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 183, known as the Family Farm ReGeneration Act.

The Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association or OEFFA, has more than 4,000 members, of which, more than half are farmers. We are in our fourth year of federal funding to support a beginning farmer education program, reaching over 1800 individuals with our educational efforts.

Our programs, alongside other organizations around the state, are reaping rewards. Ohio has the sixth largest population of beginning farmers in the country according to the most recent US Ag census. These 33,000 intrepid new agrarians are skilling up to take on the joys and challenges of coaxing food from Ohio's lush soils.

Meanwhile, OEFFA's elder farmer generation call on me nearly daily for help finding young people to carry on their agricultural legacy. One response OEFFA takes is the creation of our new program HeartlandFarmLink.org, an online matching service for farm land seekers and existing farm owners.

The match is only the first step. Significant barriers to farm transfer remain, and the top of these according to our members and National Young Farmers Coalition surveys, is finding and financing affordable farm land.

House Bill 183—introduced by Representatives Susan Manchester and John Patterson and patterned after a popular similar law in Minnesota—holds great promise for success in connecting these two sides of the farming coin. A simple tax credit may not seem like much, but a tax credit that lowers the land sale price for a young farmer, or small incentive for a landowner to rent to a beginning grower, can make all the difference in ensuring a successful land transfer.

The Family Farm ReGeneration Act does not benefit farmers alone; local economies stand to gain strength when small farms continue, local food systems are improved with diversified land use, and Ohio's environment can be more resilient with an increase of sustainable farming practices. If the act could include amendments that further incentivize transfer to historically under-represented farmers, we could even begin to address systemic land access challenges.

I urge your support of HB 183 and look forward to any questions you have.