

Ohio House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee

HB 183 Proponent Testimony October 29th 2019

Jason Ward, Grain, Forage, Seed, and Livestock Farmer

I would like to thank everyone for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony towards House Bill 183 the Family Farm and Regeneration Act.

I have been a full-time USDA certified organic farmer in the great state of Ohio for the last 3 years. I currently farm more than 36 parcels, averaging a size of five acres each, in four different counties, spread across 20 miles. I have had an immense amount of struggles over the last 3 years with cash flow infrastructure and the grain market. However, my largest challenge has been acquiring new land to rent or purchase. Increasing pressure from large corporations and investors on landowners to sell their farmland for development purposes, has been detrimental to the small family farm on which I work to make a living. The availability of farmland continues to decline at an alarming rate, yet there is currently no incentive for landowners to take a chance on beginning farmers, such as myself. These landowners need to know that the government is willing to help them if they take a chance on helping their community grow. There is also no incentive for aspiring farmers to pursue a career in a field without an opportunity for growth. How can we ensure America has food in the future when I have no idea if there will be food on the table for my son and wife? House Bill 183, the Family Farm Regeneration Act will give beginning farmers a tool to use to succeed in our most important career path. Providing food for America is my passion and my drive, but I need you to help beginning farmers so that we can better feed all of America. We need a way to expand and grow to have an opportunity for our future. Thank you for your support of HB 183.