

Testimony Supporting Increase in Poultry Inspection Program
Ohio Department of Agriculture Budget
The Ohio Poultry Association
House Finance and Appropriations Committee
May 6, 2019

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Cera and members of the committee, my name is Jim Chakeres and I serve as the Executive Vice President of the Ohio Poultry Association (OPA). I am submitting written testimony today on behalf of Ohio's egg, chicken and turkey farmers to thank you for including in the substitute version of House Bill 66 needed increased funding to enhance Ohio's food safety efforts. OPA members greatly appreciate the additional investment of \$200,000 each fiscal year to the Poultry Inspection Line Item (GRF 700415) within the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

OPA would like to thank Chairman Hoops, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and their fellow members of the Finance Subcommittee or Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources for allowing OPA to testify regarding this modest funding request. Our association attempted to provide the subcommittee with positive information on why this additional modest investment in food safety inspections would be beneficial to all Ohioans.

The Ohio Poultry Association is a non-profit, statewide trade organization that represents more than 600 Ohio egg, chicken and turkey farmers in communities throughout Ohio. Our members create nearly 20,000 jobs annually and generate nearly \$600 million in annual earnings for Ohio's economy. I am also very proud to say that OPA members are very meaningful contributors in many ways to their local communities.

Our member farmers have always been and remain firmly committed to provide safe, affordable, high-quality food not only for Ohioans but consumers around the world. OPA is very proud of the fact that through the years, our members and our organization have viewed our mission as a "partnership" with the Ohio General Assembly in such important areas as food safety and environmental responsibility. For those very reasons, we believe our request to add a very modest amount to the Poultry Inspection Line Item within the Department of Agriculture's biennial budget request is quite in line with our mutual goals.

OPA applauds ODA Director Dorothy Pelanda and the DeWine Administration for its commitment to food safety in agriculture through their overall ODA budget request; most notably their large commitment to greatly enhanced meat inspection measures. OPA and our members believe this request for very modest additional funds to the Poultry Inspection Line Item is directly reflective of the safety commitments being made by Director Pelanda and Governor DeWine.

The Poultry Inspection Line Item within ODA provides funding for poultry laboratory testing, sample collection and veterinary inspection of live birds transported into the state. This is crucial to not only our industry but all Ohioans because these inspections are vital in helping to prevent and potentially combat avian influenza. In addition, this line item also supports the Ohio Egg Quality Assurance Program, whose focus is to control the very real threat of salmonella. As you can see, this line item plays a very important role to all Ohioans in taking proactive testing and inspection measures to assure that safe, high-quality food can continue to get to your constituents.

On behalf of OPA's 600 egg, chicken and turkey farmers and their families, I thank you for consideration of our very modest request to help continue the great work that is being done by our laboratory partners in the area of food safety through the Poultry Inspection Line Item. Our association realizes putting together a large biennial budget is very difficult, and we appreciate the many funding requests you have and will continue to receive. However, we think our request will show a very positive return on a very modest investment.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions. You may also feel free to contact Dan Leite, Rob Eshenbaugh or Courtney Saunders of Capitol Advocates.