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Senator John Eklund – Sponsor Testimony
Senate Bill 50
Senate Finance Committee
March 12, 2019

Good Afternoon Chairman Dolan, Vice-Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and follow colleagues. Thank you for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony and to encourage support on Senate Bill 50, which will increase one of the state fees levied on the transfer or disposal of solid waste in Ohio and the proceeds are to be deposited in the Soil and Water Conservation District Assistance Fund.

Everyone knows the importance of Agriculture to Ohio. Part of the reason it thrives here is the quality of our soil and water resources. Ohio's soil and water conservation districts work with landowners, contractors, developers and agricultural users to develop and implement best practices that keep Ohio's soil and water resources healthy and productive while accommodating development and agriculture.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are funded by local resources and state funds (part GRF, part assorted disposal fees). Ten years ago, the ratio of local to state funding of this important work was almost 1:1. Today it has fallen to about 7:1.

Why is it important to increase the State Match to be closer to the 1:1 goal? Because the loss of state support constrains our ability as a State to properly manage our soil and water resources. It increases the burden on local funding sources, which otherwise would be available for programming. In the end, it means fewer "boots on the ground" for working with farmers, producers, developers and others to implement the management practices that keep our soils productive, our waters clean and our economy thriving. It also hampers our educational outreach -- to teach and train the importance of conservation practices and why these are needed to sustain our economy and quality of living. That's at the heart of SWCDs' ability to partner with their communities; without it, we will never do our best.

SB 50 will provide necessary funding of the delivery of invaluable expertise and assistance the SWCDs can make available to all Ohioans with all land uses, protect our water quality, and enrich Ohio's economy. With your support on this legislation, we all can be better land stewards.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 50, and I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.