



**Senate Finance Committee  
Sub HB 166 Interested Party Testimony  
Amalie Lipstreu, Policy Director  
June 17, 2019**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present interested party testimony on provisions of the operating budget, HB 166, on behalf of the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association. OEFFA is a grassroots coalition of farmers, retailers, educators and others working to rebuild healthy food systems that bring prosperity to family farmers, meet the growing consumer demand for local food, create economic opportunities for our rural communities, and safeguard the environment.

First, we thank you for the difficult work of weighing multiple priorities in need of support and ensuring the effective functioning of Ohio government.

I am here to speak for the inclusion of a beginning farmer tax credit in the budget. The average age of Ohio farmers is approximately 56 years of age, a number that will continue to rise unless we do more than just attract but also keep young farmers engaged in agriculture. Having a next generation of farmers is critical to our national food security, it is also an important part of our state economy. Ohio is sixth in the nation in the number of beginning farmers and while it's heartening to see Ohio lead in beginning farmer growth, this group is challenged with being able to find affordable land that they can buy or lease. National studies show that access to land is the biggest barrier they face.

OEFFA has been bringing together farmland owners and land seekers for years and that in combination with our operation of a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant bears out the reality of the challenges in getting access to suitable farmland.

The land values in Ohio went from approximately \$2,000 per acre to almost \$6,200 per acre between 1997 and 2017. Purchasing land and equipment to start a farm operation is prohibitive for many but we can aid in the land transfer between generations. Representatives Susan Manchester and John Patterson included the provisions necessary for this tax credit in HB 183. A similar law that passed in Minnesota almost two years ago saw 850 applications in the first year of the program.

This program would provide a tax credit to landowners that sell or lease land or other agricultural assets to a beginning farmer and provide a tax credit of up to \$1,500 to the beginning farmer if they participate in an approved financial management course.

Please include this small investment in the future of Ohio agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.