



*Working together for Ohio farmers to advance agriculture and strengthen our communities.*

**Senate Finance Committee  
H.B. 2 Proponent Testimony  
Jenna Beadle, Director of State Policy  
October 8, 2019**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to support of H.B. 2 and the funding it provides for workforce development.

I would like to begin by explaining a little about Ohio Farm Bureau's policy development process. It is truly grassroots driven as the County Farm Bureaus write, debate, and vote on their local policy and state policy recommendations, which are voted on by a delegate body comprised of county members from across the state at the Ohio Farm Bureau annual meeting every December. Those policies constitute the OFBF state policy book and are what we use to take positions and advocate for our members.

Workforce development is a priority issue for Ohio Farm Bureau. We support enhanced research, development, and programming to meet the workforce development needs in Ohio agriculture along with collaboration between local business, industry, health providers, agriculture, and education to ensure educational programs are not only aligned with college entrance requirements, but also local employment needs and opportunities. This bill supports needed resources for industry sector partnerships, which are crucial to collaboration.

One example of a key industry sector partnership is Extension services who engage in leadership development, help farmers meet certification requirements, research and recommend best management practices, and provide important education and curricula for the agriculture industry as a whole. For these services to continue flourishing, adequate funding is needed to support their efforts as an industry partner, which this bill helps address.

There are many costs associated with our members doing business in Ohio. Agriculture faces significant challenges today. Net farm income declined by 30% between 2012 and 2019, crop revenue saw a 50% decrease during that time, and input costs remain high, while new challenges in the areas of water quality, animal care, and food safety all add additional costs to farm operations. The TechCred program created under this bill would provide some margin for employers using a certification program or industry-recognized credential specific to agriculture to train their employees who may not have been able to absorb the cost in the past.