



**SHELBY COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

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PAMELA STEINKE, Clerk of the Board

May 20, 2015

Members of the Senate Finance Corrections Subcommittee

Chairman Uecker, Vice Chair Brown and members of the Subcommittee; I wish to provide written testimony to the committee regarding increased funding for Ohio's Soil and Water Conservation Districts. My name is Tony Bornhorst; I am a Shelby County Commissioner and a lifelong farmer, and a Past Board Member for Shelby Soil and Water Conservation District from 1981 to 1989. I have included with this testimony my testimony to the Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on March 12, 2015.

As Ohio addresses water quality issues across the state; local Soil and Water Conservation Districts are the connection between the farm community and state efforts to prevent nutrient loading of ditches, streams, rivers and lakes. Funding of these Districts is imperative to have knowledgeable staff and the resources to work with Agriculture to implement permanent and progressive applications that will maintain nutrients on the farmland. Adaptation of practices can be slow, but as conservation minded farmers implement new ideas, local Soil and Water Conservation District personnel can be their resource and then promote achievable and successful practices to other farmers within the community.

The Shelby County Commissioners have steadfastly supported the Shelby Soil and Water Conservation District, one of only 5 areas that we as a county provide funding that is not mandated. That is consistent with other counties around the State of Ohio as local funding for Soil and Water Conservation Districts has remained stable, but the State match has dropped to more than \$2 million less than a 1 to 1 match.

I ask the Subcommittee to budget the necessary funding to Ohio's Soil and Water Conservation Districts to meet a 1 to 1 match. The funding will aid our local Conservation districts to have the personnel and resources to assist local land owners to establish measures that will maintain nutrients on the land, providing for productive Agriculture while reducing nutrient loading of our streams, rivers and lakes.

Thank you,

Anthony J. Bornhorst



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March 12, 2015

Members of the Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources Committee

Chairman Thompson, Ranking member O'Brien, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development, and Natural Resources, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 64. My name is Tony Bornhorst; I am a Shelby County Commissioner and a fourth generation farmer of 40 plus years. The family has operated a grain and livestock farming operation in Western Shelby County since 1869, and my brother and I were honored in 2000 to receive the National Environmental Stewardship Award, one of four farms nationwide, from the National Pork Producers Council. I am here today to ask for support of increased funding for Ohio's Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

County Soil and Water Conservation districts are the boots on the ground when it comes to delivering conservation measures and ultimately implementing those practices with the farm owners. Ohio Water Quality Issues have been on the front page for several years, and have always been a concern, but with the Toledo drinking water ban last August the attention to Lake Erie water quality has become the poster child for water quality issues. According to news services and in particular the Ohio Country Journal the federal government has designated 17.4 million dollars to address phosphorus runoff in the Western Basin of Lake Erie, and the Maumee River Watershed. My concern is that those funds will be spent without making significant impact of implementing permanent conservation practices at the farm level.

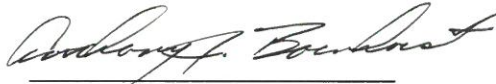
Agriculture is part of the reason for phosphorus entering the Maumee River, changes and adaptation of conservation practices need to happen at the farm level in order to make the most significant reduction in phosphorus loading. There are numerous practices; including blind tile inlets, use of substrate material to filter nutrients before surface and subsurface drainage water enters a main drainage ditch or creek, use of buffer strips, creation of wetlands and planting of cover crops, all of these practices and others take funds to implement but they also need professional staff to help that process.

That is where local, County Soil and Water Conservation Districts provide the professional advice and administration of funding to the farmer. Soil and Water Conservation Districts have two components, USDA-NRCS, federal, and ODNR Division of Soil and Water, state and local. The staff works collectively to deliver service to landowners. Without proper staffing the capability of delivering expert information, installation of conservation practices, and administration of funding incentives, the likelihood of having a significant impact on long term phosphorus reduction is not good.

Allow me to give a personal example for our farming operation. Bornhorst Bros. has a CNMP, Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan, which needs to be updated as the fifth generation of the Bornhorst family has moved from raising swine to a cattle feeding operation. We applied for an update in June of 2014, in order to apply for a manure holding structure for the cattle portion of the operation. The CNMP must first be updated by rule before NRCS and Division of Soil and Water can proceed on the manure holding structure application. Totally understandable, but due to the workload we are still waiting. The same holds true for County Soil and Water Districts in the Maumee River Watershed. There just is not enough staff at the local levels to timely and effectively use Federal, State funding to address the issue of phosphorus reduction at the farm gate.

County Soil and Water Districts are funded and ultimately staffed by local dollars, matched by State funds, and also Federal Staffing, NRCS. I met with Congressman Jim Jordan on Monday, March 9th to address the federal side of this equation. I am asking that state funding for Soil and Water Conservation Districts be increased by two million dollars to meet the staffing needs that will be required to implement and fund conservation practices at the farm level, that ultimately will aid in the reduction of phosphorus leaving the farm field, which in turn will help Water Quality issues at Lake Erie but also ultimately around the State of Ohio. An increase of \$2 million will bring the state match equal to local funding.

Thank you for allowing time to hear my testimony, and if there are question I would be most happy to address them.



Anthony J. Bornhorst
Shelby County Commissioner