



Ohio House State and Local Government Committee  
The Honorable Marlene Anielski, Chairwoman  
Proponent Testimony on House Bill 12  
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School Students  
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Dear Chairwoman Anielski and members of the State Government Committee,

We are students from Westerville, Ohio. We are happy to be here today in support of House Bill 12, which would make the barn the historical architectural structure of the state of Ohio. We would first like to thank Representative Gonzales for sponsoring this bill showing the historic value, meaning and importance the barn plays to the state of Ohio.

Eric Sloane, the author of *An Age of Barns*, said, "Those who seek the spirit of America might do well to look first in the countryside". This quote inspired us to look in our own area and led us to a historic barn in Westerville, the Everal Barn. The Everal Barn is on the National Register of Historic Places, and there has been a lot of work done to preserve this one type of barn. The windmill on the barn, serves as a superb example of nineteenth century farm architecture. John W. Everal, an industrialist in Westerville, OH in the 1900's, made tile at the J.W. Everal Tile Company. This tile was the first glass-like tile produced in the State of Ohio and the tile company was located just east of where the barn is located today. This hometown connection served as a springboard for our bill.

As we delved into the rich history of Ohio, it became evident that all styles and types of barns should be celebrated. Regardless of their architectural style, barns have played an integral part in the economic, historical, and cultural development of Ohio. In 2003, when Ohio celebrated its bicentennial, Steven George, the executive director of the Ohio Bicentennial Commission and his committee contracted with Scott Hagan, an Ohio artist, to create a highly visible, historic bicentennial barn in each of Ohio's 88 counties to commemorate Ohio's bicentennial. The barn was perfect for this endeavor. It is one of the only structures represented in each of the 88 counties of Ohio, and the fact that there is no one shared architectural style reflects the rich cultural traits that make up Ohio. The commission hoped that these barns would "cause people to recall some of their fond memories of the bicentennial and reflect this important part of our

history forever.” These barns, in every county of Ohio, serve as iconic and unique reminders of not only our state bicentennial, but the role that the barn has played throughout Ohio history. Some examples of these barns include the Warren County barn in Lebanon, Hamilton County barn by Cincinnati, this Cuyahoga County barn near Cleveland, the Lucas County barn near Toledo, and this barn in Athens County in Southeast, OH. Closer to our home, we get to enjoy the Bicentennial Barns in Delaware and Franklin Counties, which are located close to our school.

Additionally, Ohio is home to one of only three 16-sided barns in America. This barn was built in 1924 and was repaired and painted in 2008. This is one of the most distinctive barns in Ohio. The design was created by George Washington in the late 1700's. Washington designed the barn so that horses would be enclosed from the elements of the weather. It included a treading floor located on the second floor of a two-story structure that the horses could access via a ramp, which allowed for increased grain production and decreased barn theft. His design was highly innovative for his time. The result was a building that was conceptually as much a machine as it was architecture. However, today's generation is moving away from the traditional barns. Most people are not even aware that the barns they see when driving along the highway are historical and represent what Ohio used to be and may never be again. Many people don't even know the educational value that barns have provided for this state as a whole, for example, the first school in Westerville was held in a barn before specialized school buildings were made. Making the barn a symbol of Ohio would not only help to raise awareness of the barn because of its achievements and historical value, it would also help to preserve these monumental representations of Ohio.

Barns also help tell Ohio's story over the last several hundred years. A Washington Court House man by the name of Maurice Zimmerman used barns as a means for advertising in the 1920's - creating Ohio's Mail Pouch Barns. From the 40 counties in Ohio which are home to Round Barns, first built by the Shakers, many of which are registered with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, to the barns used by Ohio farmers today, these barns help us connect to the life and work of our communities through the generations. As our communities become more urban, we need to preserve these barns that pay homage to our heritage. Through Ohio's barns, we can learn a great deal about the people who built them, their place of origin, and their cultural history. This could not be more true to the barn and the history each one carries.

From the first barns built by settlers coming into the Ohio country along Zane's Trace to today's barns built on the farmland throughout Ohio, barns evoke a sense of tradition and closeness to the land and community, and many farm families look to their old barns as links to their past. For example, Ohio's Appalachian counties feature quilt barn trails that offer lessons in heritage, culture and tradition. These barns feature colorful quilt-square-inspired murals that decorate the sides of rural barns to celebrate the region's proud traditions of quilting, storytelling and farming. Since 2001, when the first quilt barn formed in Adams County, an estimated 2,000 murals have joined the national clothesline of quilts, which today extends across the country and even international borders. This highlights the pride emitted from Ohio's barns.

Many barns are in danger of demolition due to new farming technologies, yet many barns can be refitted for continued use in agriculture, often at considerable savings over the cost of new buildings. Agriculture is still one of the major economic forces in the state of Ohio, and we need to recognize as a state, these landmarks of the past and the present. Barns embody our historic traditions and customs while reflecting the farming advancements seen today. Barns are a vital part of Ohio's heritage. By making the barn the official historical architectural structure and a state symbol of Ohio, we can preserve a part of our past and future.

To help build support for this initiative we have established a grass roots social networking campaign through Facebook, Twitter and a creation of a website dedicated to educating and garnering support for House Bill 12. In addition, phone, email and mail communication has also been used to create awareness and build additional support for this bill. This support is continuing to expand beyond our school into our community and throughout the state of Ohio.

We would like to thank Representative Gonzales for her support of House Bill 12 and the support we received from the Ohio History Connection, Friends of Ohio Barns, and the Westerville Public Library. Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill and for the opportunity to be with you today. We would be happy to answer any questions.