



Don Jones & Shane Wilkin
State Representatives

Chairman Koehler, Vice-Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, I thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 665

HB 665 is a common-sense reform bill. This bill has been worked on extensively by the Ohio Fair Managers Association in consultation with the County Commissioners Association. Many of the sections of code regarding county fairs haven't been updated or even touched since the 1950's. I was president of the Harrison County Fair Board for 9 years, and I can tell you it is time to modernize and change.

This bill will increase the payment from the county to the ag. Society from \$800 to \$1600, it will remove the requirement that any income from alcohol sales be used to pay insurance payments allowing for more flexibility. As all public entities, ag. Societies are audited by the Auditor of State, and current law requires different information be submitted to the ODAg and the Auditor's office this bill will better align these reports so fairs aren't having to complete duplicative work in 2 different formats. Another change is that under current law the total net indebtedness of a society cannot exceed 25% of the society's annual revenues, this bill will clarify that a society's annual payments for debt obligations cannot exceed 25% of its annual revenue, which will give ag societies much needed flexibility. There are more changes, most of which are technical we won't bore you with, but I will defer to our good colleague for more.

Continuing with financial flexibility and feasibility- This bill also has provisions to address some concerns during the current coronavirus pandemic. During any period of time that mass gatherings are restricted due to an Executive Order related to COVID-19, if a county agricultural society or independent agricultural society cancels an annual exhibition, the applicable county treasurer and the Department of Agriculture must pay the society an amount that the society otherwise would have received if it had held the exhibition, or if the Ohio Expositions Commission cancels the annual fair, the Director of Agriculture must distribute money to the Commission in an amount that it otherwise would have received if it had held the fair. Furthermore, if a county agricultural society, independent agricultural society, or the Ohio Expositions Commission is unable to conduct a previously scheduled horse race, the society and the Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association may agree to alternative accommodations, including the rescheduling of the dates and location of any horse race.

Under the bill an agricultural society would also retain control and management of the land occupied by the agricultural society if an annual fair is not able to be held as a result of the Executive Order.

Chairman Koehler, Vice-Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, thank you again for allowing us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 665. We ask for your support and will be glad to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.
