

**Testimony to the Ohio House of Representatives' Finance
Committee**
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Chairman Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Sobacki and members of the Ohio House Economic Development and Workforce Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. I am Mark Light, OSU Extension Area Leader, 4-H educator, and resident of Hardin County. I am proud to represent the 429 faculty, 1,488 staff, 3,647 students, 43,000 living alumni, 47,000 animals, and 11,000 acres that make up CFAES. We are one college with three campuses (Columbus, Wooster, and statewide, with our faculty/staff split evenly among the three) and three missions (research, teaching, and extension) all dedicated to one essential purpose: We sustain life.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2, and would like to thank the sponsors, Representative Jon Cross and Representative Michelle Lepore-Hagan for their hard work to produce this bill. Specifically, the substitute bill includes The Ohio State University Extension as an entity in the TechCred Program and the Individual Microcredential Assistance Program.

Since the passage of the Morrill Act in 1862 that established colleges focused on the agricultural and mechanical arts, institutions like The Ohio State University have been preparing the workforce for the next set of challenges faced by industry. The College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) has been preparing the next generation for careers in the food, agriculture, and environmental sciences disciplines for 150 years. CFAES is the cornerstone college of The Ohio State University.

At Ohio State, we have multiple ways of impacting the lifelong learning of individuals across Ohio. Perhaps our biggest resource is the commitment and talent of our Extension faculty and staff that work in every county across Ohio. They are delivering daily programming that ensures people are trained to meet the requirements of keeping our food safe and families employed. ServSafe training is provided by Ohio State Extension in counties around the state. ServSafe is flexible enough to meet every organization's needs, utilizing a variety of training methods. Targeting restaurant managers, school food service, nursing homes, and other food service personnel, the ServSafe training program is the industry standard for food safety education.

Further, water quality and nutrient management has created a demand for more certifications for Ohio's farmers and agribusinesses. After the passage of Senate Bill 150, The Ohio State University began providing certifications for every nutrient applicator in the state of Ohio. This educational course was needed by one person on every farm to enable the farm to purchase and apply fertilizer. The impact to agricultural production continues to grow beyond farmers and agribusiness. Extension educators are being asked to provide course work and training to equipment technicians to ensure the technicians can fix the precision agriculture equipment that is now equipped on a modern tractor. We are currently developing short courses and trainings to keep up with the real time technological changes in

agricultural equipment. Farmers, agribusiness consultants, soil and water conservation staff, and the National Resource Conservation Service are among the many that have requested this service.

In 2015, The Ohio State University Extension office in Hardin County, population 33,000, created a new innovative classroom space called the Spark Lab. The goal of the Spark Lab is to instill inspiration or “spark” that youth and adults need to learn, discover, and grow in a creative environment. There were three main objectives to the Spark Lab. The first was to be an educational resource center where university delivered learning could take place to local residents. Staff offer Workshop Wednesdays to local youth on photography, money management, robotics, art, nature, and many other topics. Tech Tuesdays showcase technology sessions to adults on smartphones, tablets, graphic design, video production, coding, and social media. The second objective was to be a university and community hub within the county. The goal was to make the space more accessible for the community by allowing them to meet in the Spark Lab and utilize technology. The final objective of the space was to have touchdown space for entrepreneurs. As an entrepreneur center, OSU Extension specialists and staff can help local businesses and entrepreneurs learn and create in the Spark Lab, while not having to leave the county. With Extension offices in every county, we are poised to deliver on demand microcredentials in spaces like the Hardin County Spark lab as part of the TechCred program.

CFAES is also moving quickly to address the remarkable challenges facing industry in Ohio. Dean Kress has shifted resources to allow for the creation of a new Strategic Partnerships Unit. Strongly supported by the Nationwide Foundation, the College is moving proactively to engage potential partners to address shared goals. One example is with the J.M. Smucker Company. Recently Smucker’s purchased a pet food company out of California and determined the employees needed a deeper understanding of animal nutrition. After sharing this need, CFAES hosted Smucker’s employees on the Wooster Campus and provided the short courses their employees needed to address the challenges facing their company.

The Agricultural Technical Institute (ATI) on the Ohio State University, CFAES Wooster Campus is rare in the Land Grant system across the nation. ATI provides options for two year technical degrees and a pathway to a four year bachelor’s degree on our Columbus Campus. ATI graduates are in strong demand in the nursery and landscape, turfgrass, floriculture, precision agriculture, and livestock production industries. We have been working with some of the leading swine producers in the state to have more immersive learning opportunities for students. Rapidly changing technology and the high cost of maintaining modern swine facilities has created an opportunity for “on the farm” learning that ATI graduates find extremely valuable.

Finally, we learned in 2015 that the demand for jobs requiring a four year degree in the food, agriculture, and natural resource sector are over 58,000 new openings per year. Unfortunately, universities offering educational degrees in the food, agriculture, and natural resources are only graduating 38,000 students per year with a bachelor’s degree in these in demand fields. We still have a long way to go to meet this demand, and we look forward to partnering with the General Assembly to address these challenges in future.

In closing, we would like to thank the members of the committee for their hard work on substitute House Bill 2 and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions.