



OHIO SOYBEAN
ASSOCIATION

**Ohio House of Representatives
Energy & Natural Resources Committee
Proponent Testimony for Senate Bill 2
Statewide Watershed Planning and Management Program
Tuesday, December 3, 2019**

Chair Vitale, Vice Chair Kick, Ranking Member Denson and distinguished members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee; The Ohio Soybean Association and the Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association would like to offer our support for Senate Bill 2 sponsored by Senators Peterson and Dolan for the creation of a statewide watershed planning and management program under the direction of the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

This bill is a proactive step toward growing Ohio's resources to tackle ongoing nutrient and water quality challenges facing the state. It aligns with our organizations' stances that local, state and federal government partners must work together to support the adoption and implementation of voluntary conservation best management practices on farms and around our communities to improve water quality and soil health. We continue to believe that working together as partners in a cooperative and collaborative manner to address our challenges, rather than calling upon burdensome rules and regulations, offers the best path forward toward real solutions in Ohio.

Of particular importance to our members, this bill establishes a boots-on-the-ground investment of personnel in seven identified watershed regions. These personnel will assist in watershed planning and management activities and form a critical support structure for long term strategies to increase implementation of best management practices. Further, the bill also identifies that those selected to serve in the capacity of watershed planning and management coordinators be experienced or educated in disciplines related to water quality improvement, planning and management. Furthermore, this bill directs those coordinators to adhere to strict scientific standards when collecting and assessing field data in guiding their watershed planning and management work.

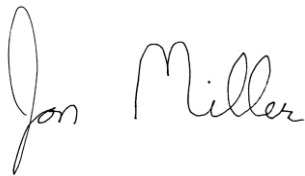
Additionally, this legislation directs that data and associated records collected and compiled within the state's watershed program will not be treated as public records subject to disclosure. This is a vital protection for our grower partners and will facilitate a broader program acceptance. Our organizations deem the collection of scientifically sound data as equally important to protecting our members' rights to privacy. In that vein, we support efforts by the legislature to guarantee that privacy which we believe will foster broader voluntary participation.

In addition to protecting privacy rights, this legislation calls for the utilization of nine-element plans, providing a valuable tool for stakeholders to use in this program. Adopting these plans, which are already required when seeking federal assistance under the Clean Water Act and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), provide a uniform standard to ensure consistency in identifying, analyzing and adopting effective water quality solutions throughout the various watersheds in the state.

Finally, this legislation clearly defines the General Assembly's intent that ODA collaborate with organizations representing agriculture, conservation, the environment and institutions of higher learning. This clear directive bolsters the ongoing efforts of the state to partner with these groups in the establishment of a farmer certification program. Such a program will better prepare Ohio's farming community to adopt and implement high impact best management practices. In concert with this broad coalition of stakeholders, Ohio's farmers play an important partnership role in the state's water quality efforts. By formalizing this coalition group, the legislature will further the work of a critical partnership.

The Ohio Soybean Association and the Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association support SB 2 and welcome this effort to address Ohio's water quality challenges in a collaborative and cooperative manner. We are happy to answer any questions that the committee may have at any time as necessary.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

Jon Miller, President
Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J L Scott Metzger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

Scott Metzger, President
Ohio Soybean Association