



Working together for Ohio farmers to advance agriculture and strengthen our communities.

**Proponent Testimony House Bill 485
House Ways and Means Committee
Jenna Beadle, Director of State Policy
May 19, 2020**

Chair Merrin, Vice Chair LaRe, and Ranking Member Rogers, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 485, which will remove unnecessary hurdles for farmers enrolled in CAUV.

Current law requires County Auditors to send up to two certified letters annually reminding farmers to renew their CAUV application. Although the re-appraisal process happens every three years, farmers have to update their CAUV status annually. If a farmer fails to renew their application they can be removed from the CAUV program and have to pay a three-year recoupment fee. Farm Bureau has worked diligently with our members as have County Auditors to make sure farmers get their renewal in on time.

Challenges exist though and the current law places a burden on farmers and County Auditors that HB 485 would relieve. The first burden is on the County Auditor's office; mailing two separate certified letters to all enrolled in the county under CAUV is costly in terms of finances and labor. Many offices struggle each year with this statutory requirement and have other means of determining if a landowner is still using their property for agricultural production. The other challenge is placed on the farmer; many landowners rent their property to be farmed and/or winter in warmer states and miss the Auditor's letter. We know farmers are an aging population, so there are also issues that arise if the landowner passes away and the children do not receive the letter. In both cases, they could be removed from the CAUV program for missing that deadline.

I do want to point out that County Auditors' offices have done a tremendous job of assisting our members with these challenges and have been gracious when mistakes happen. However, these problems cause quite a hassle for both parties and tie up valuable resources. We appreciate that many auditors will want to continue with this method, and the bill allows for them to continue sending certified letters; it simply removes the requirement to do so and gives other auditors flexibility to use other methods that fit their counties better. Technology advancements have allowed for many other ways to gather information on changes in CAUV property since this law was written and can help streamline the process.

Farm Bureau would like to thank Rep. Stephens for introducing this legislation and attempting to ease unnecessary regulatory burdens for our farmers. We are working with his office to create some guardrails for the bill and a little more guidance for County Auditors on which tax year to apply changes in property value without the renewal requirement.