



OHIO SOYBEAN  
ASSOCIATION

**Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee  
Proponent Testimony for Sub. S.B. 2  
Statewide Watershed Planning and Management Program  
Wednesday, May 22, 2019**

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member O'Brien and distinguished members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee; The Ohio Soybean Association and the Ohio Corn and Wheat Growers Association would like to offer our support for Sub. SB 2 sponsored by Senators Peterson and Dolan for the creation of a statewide watershed planning and management program under the direction of the director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

We thank Senators Peterson and Dolan for taking this proactive step toward growing Ohio's resources to tackle ongoing nutrient and water quality challenges that we are faced with in the state. The spirit of this bill aligns with our organization's stance that local, state and federal government partners 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 healthy soils. We continue to believe that working together as partners in a cooperative and collaborative manner to address our challenges rather than calling upon overly burdensome rules and regulations offers the best path forward toward real solutions here in Ohio.

The spirit of cooperation and collaboration is evident in this bill by the nature of its inclusivity of inviting public and private organizations to partner with state, county, township, municipal or other entities in efforts to protect Ohio's watersheds.

This bill asks for an investment of boots-on-the-ground personnel in seven identified watershed regions throughout the state to assist each soil and water conservation district to engage in watershed planning and management activities. 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.

This bill also addresses several other important components that we feel will be extremely beneficial for setting this new program up for success. First, it directs that data and associated records collected and compiled by the program are not public records subject to disclosure. The collection of scientifically-sound data is just as important as protecting data of private land owners. Farmers are willing partners ready to cooperate with those who will be involved in this

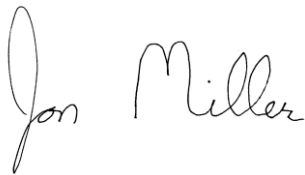
new watershed planning and management program as long as they are assured that their rights to privacy are protected when it comes to managing information that comes from their farm businesses and land. Respecting that privacy coupled with the expectation of high standards for statistical measurement and analysis will yield real and actionable outcomes for this program.

The inclusion of the use of nine-element plans provides a valuable tool for stakeholders to use in this program. The use of nine-element plans, which are required instruments to be used when seeking federal assistance under the Clean Water Act and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), provide a uniform standard for Ohio to adopt to ensure consistency in identifying, analyzing and deciding upon the application of water quality solutions to adopt throughout the various watersheds in the state.

Defining the intent of the General Assembly to collaborate with stakeholders in agriculture, conservation, environment and higher education to establish a farmer certification program is aligned with the work that has already begun with this broad coalition of stakeholders. This certification program will better prepare Ohio's farming community to adopt and implement high impact conservation best management practices. Ohio's farmers are important partners in this water quality effort as they are on the front line carrying out the work and making the investments needed on the farm to be better stewards of the environment and our natural resources.

The Ohio Soybean Association and the Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association support Sub. SB 2 and the promise it holds to add much needed boots-on-the-ground support 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, looped "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, looped "J" and "M".

Scott Metzger, President  
Ohio Soybean Association