

Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Ohio Cattlemen's Association, Ohio Dairy Producers Association, Ohio Poultry Association,
Ohio Sheep Improvement Association and Ohio Pork Council
House Bill 166
May 23, 2019

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Ohio Cattlemen's Association, Ohio Dairy Producers Association, Ohio Poultry Association, Ohio Sheep Improvement Association and Ohio Pork Council on House Bill 166, the Fiscal Year 2020 – 2021 budget.

By way of background, beef, pork, poultry, sheep and dairy farmers make a significant contribution to Ohio:

- Ohio's cattle farmers raise approximately 307,000 beef cows, with a total value of cattle and calves at \$1.45 billion
- There are about 1,997 dairy farms in Ohio, with an economic impact of \$2.35 billion
- Ohio raises more than 2.95 million hogs each year, with an economic impact of \$576.8 million
- Ohio is one of the largest egg farming states in the nation, producing 9.5 billion eggs a year, with an economic impact of \$3.3 billion
- Ohio is the largest sheep producing state East of the Mississippi River with approximately 3,400 farms producing 130,000 sheep and lambs with an economic impact of \$24 million

Specifically, the above organizations support:

- **The collective water quality framework and measures proposed.** We support the H2Ohio Fund as a statewide multi-faceted approach to address water quality. We recognize the value of an approach that addresses wastewater and water supply infrastructure, wetland creation, and utilizes science to support water quality efforts. Understanding that the development of the H2Ohio Fund has generated other beneficial and worthy proposals, from both chambers, and we look forward to being a part of the conversation as the leadership works towards a significant financial and organizational commitment to Ohio's water quality.
- **Updates to a qualified immunity in existing law from nuisance lawsuits so that the qualified immunity is applied more uniformly across the state, while maintaining recourse against bad actors.**
- **The Ohio State University Cooperative Extension's request for \$26,699,250 million and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center for \$39,861,470.** Both of these budgets are key to our member success in everything from water quality to helping to address the opioid crisis.
- **The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine's request for \$2M in the first year and \$4M of the second year of the biennium and annually thereafter.** Ohio State is the only veterinary school in Ohio, and 80% of the veterinarians in Ohio are graduates of The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

- **Representative Manchester’s and Representative Patterson’s amendment to incentivize helping beginning farmers.** We recognize the value in doing anything we can to help usher in the next generation of farmers, especially in a business with steep entry costs. This amendment was included in the as-passed House version, and we recommend the Senate retain this language.

Our farmer members recognize that the condition of Lake Erie needs to improve, which is why they continue to work toward improvement and embrace the opportunity to be a part of the solution. For example, livestock and poultry organizations demonstrated their ability to educate farmers on the regulations required in Senate Bill 1, which restricts nutrient application in the Western Lake Erie Basin during certain weather conditions. In addition, livestock and poultry organizations support the ongoing effort to certify farmers through Senate Bill 150, which has certified nearly 19,000 Ohio farmers on appropriate nutrient application.

For decades, our members have worked diligently to reduce their potential impact on the environment. Through the use of innovative farming methods, and best management practices, farmers continue to work toward improvement and protection of our state’s valuable resources, including Lake Erie. The funding provided by H2Ohio would ensure that farmers can continue to use and improve these necessary practices.

The Ohio State University has a strong commitment to agriculture and water quality and has been a partner in robust research and best management practices implementation, which is why we encourage the Senate to help in supporting this esteemed land grant institution in their endeavor to create strategic partnerships to address research and educational needs to support water quality, and plant and animal science. They are taking the work at the university and directly impacting our communities, consumers, businesses, and all Ohioans.

Finally, as mentioned above, we support the amendment to incentivize helping beginning farmers and hope the Senate retains the language to create this important tax credit program.

Again, we support the H2Ohio Fund, updates to existing qualified immunity from law suits, as well as the language to support a tax credit for helping beginning farmers and necessary funding for OSU’s Extension, OARDC, and CVM. Thank you for your time and support of Ohio Agriculture.

				
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