



TESTIMONY OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR TIM DERICKSON BEFORE THE SENATE GENERAL GOVERNMENT AND AGENCY REVIEW COMMITTEE

May 7, 2019

Chairman Schuring, Vice Chairman Rulli, and Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the committee – thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of Governor DeWine, Director Pelanda, and the Ohio Department of Agriculture. I come before this Committee today not only as the Assistant Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, but as someone who was fortunate to be raised on a dairy farm in Butler County. I cherish my time on the farm and bring a lot of the values I learned there to my job today.

Director Pelanda has spent a great deal of the first few weeks in this role on the road, hosting “meet-and-greets” with the people of Ohio’s food and agriculture industry. We are listening to folks - hearing their stories, perspectives, and possible answers to the issues this industry faces today - because we firmly believe that the best solutions come from those closest to the problem. And rest assured, when it comes to the many issues facing our agricultural community today, our loyalty is only to the right solution. The budget Governor DeWine has introduced to you demonstrates his support for providing permanent fixes to these problems, and I’m excited to talk more about those today.

Our Department is focused on a few primary principles: safeguarding Ohio’s food supply, protecting consumers, promoting environmental stewardship, and maintaining the health of the state’s animals and plants. The department also works to promote Ohio’s agricultural products and to create economic opportunities for Ohio’s farmers, food processors, and agribusinesses. As you are aware, Ohio’s food and agriculture sector is the state’s largest industry, adding \$124 billion to Ohio’s economy annually and accounting for one in every eight jobs.

Water Quality

The Governor’s budget proposal recognizes the importance of improving water quality across our beautiful Ohio and invests resources toward long-lasting solutions. Through the newly created H2Ohio fund, this budget provides an additional \$30.3 million to fund initiatives that protect Ohio’s water sources all over the state. It also provides \$20.0 million in each year, first provided in Senate Bill 299, to improve water quality in Lake Erie and assist producers in the Western Lake Erie Basin. This budget also provides an additional \$5.0 million in each fiscal year to local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to allow them to administer these programs - because we know if we want to ask our partners for help, they need the people to do the work. And most exciting of all; this will be done with existing resources, without being saddled with additional debt.

Among many positive impacts, H2Ohio will:

- build capacity to promote soil testing and fertilizer application and other best land management practices;
- provide support for equipment purchase or retrofits;
- support investment in additional “edge of field” technology to monitor water quality;



- create buffer strips that filter nutrients before they enter our waterways.

Our partner agencies with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency will share additional opportunities that can be realized with this investment.

Through our meet and greets, we've learned the issues and solutions vary from Lucas to Lawrence County, but everywhere people want to be part of the solution. This budget reflects that movement and provides funding to invest in targeted, long-term solutions that improve water quality statewide, and we are excited to work with our partner agencies towards this goal. Safe and clean water is essential to a healthy and productive life, and we all owe our children and grandchildren the opportunity to have this when we are gone.

Consumer Safety

Furthering our mission to protecting consumers, this budget proposal demonstrates a commitment to increase safety for families who enjoy roller coasters, bounce houses, or other amusement rides. In calendar year 2018, our amusement ride safety office inspected 37 roller coasters, six aerial or bungee-jump facilities, more than 2,500 inflatable rides, nearly 450 "kiddie" rides, and a thousand other amusement rides found at fairs and festivals. This is in addition to the supplemental, re-inspections, and other monitoring that occurs daily. We are fulfilling our statutory responsibility to inspect amusement rides, but as a commitment to families across Ohio, we want to do even more to ensure the safety of every single Ohioan.

In response to the tragedy in our state in 2017, the amusement ride industry is looking at new standards that could ultimately impact the time our staff spends inspecting rides. Our department is developing additional inspection protocols and procedures that we believe will keep families safe. To ensure the proper resources can be devoted to these efforts, the Governor's proposal supports additional staff and equipment. Without additional resources, businesses may have a longer wait time before a permit can be issued and an inspection can be conducted, and in a seasonal industry like amusement rides, we must ensure resources are available soon.

Food Safety

This budget also works to ensure the safety of our food by providing additional general revenue fund dollars for our Division of Meat Inspection – dedicated public servants who play a vital role in inspecting the safety of meat products every day. Our Meat Inspection staff is required to be present during daily operations, and as the industry grows, we are incurring overtime, having difficulty retaining staff, and utilizing supervisors to cover inspections when they should be overseeing inspection activities. It is also important to remember that products from fully inspected facilities cannot enter the marketplace without ODA inspection – so timeliness and effectiveness are critical to Ohio's meat and poultry processors. This budget provides support to hire additional staff and necessary supplies and equipment to ensure there is no delay to the meat processing industry in Ohio. Our goal is to accommodate this growing industry, and most importantly, work to ensure the meat consumers eat continues to be safe.

In addition to supporting meat inspection, this budget will allow the department to continue to implement the federal Food Safety Modernization Act and ensure high-volume dog breeders are appropriately licensed and inspected to ensure animal safety. When there is an increase in volume for inspections or testing, so too does the volume increase for the department's laboratories. This budget



will continue to support supplies and personnel needed to conduct timely and efficient laboratory analysis – work that ultimately helps Ohio’s food and agriculture industry.

Wine Tax

One of the faster growing sectors of our food and agriculture industry, are our grape growers and wine makers. Our budget proposal includes a renewal of the two cent per gallon tax on wine sold in Ohio. This money, in addition to a permanent three cents per gallon tax, funds the research and marketing work of the Ohio Grape Industries Committee.

The Committee provides research and marketing opportunities for the grape and wine industry – a rapidly growing sector - with 316 licensed wineries and nearly two dozen applications pending. In 2007, Ohio had just 85 licensed wineries ... a growth of more than 350 percent in just over a decade. The grape and wine industry provides more than 8,000 full-time jobs and have an annual economic impact of \$1.3 billion to Ohio. A renewal of this tax would allow important research and marketing efforts to continue, further propelling the rapid growth of this sector of our food and agriculture industry.

Conclusion

The dedicated public servants at the Ohio Department of Agriculture are committed to fulfilling our mission to safeguard and protect Ohio’s citizens, plants, animals, and natural resources, while being responsible stewards of public dollars. Governor DeWine’s budget allows us to responsibly continue that work and provides needed resources to implement long-term solutions that improve water quality, protect consumers, ensure food safety, and support Ohio’s food and agriculture industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.

