

**Testimony Supporting Increase in Poultry Inspection Program**  
**Ohio Department of Agriculture Budget**  
**The Ohio Poultry Association**  
**Senate General Government & Agency Review Subcommittee**  
**May 14, 2019**

Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the subcommittee, my name is Jim Chakeres and I serve as the Executive Vice President of the Ohio Poultry Association (OPA). I am submitting written testimony today on behalf of Ohio's egg, chicken and turkey farmers to ask for your support for positive action taken by the Ohio House regarding an enhanced commitment to food safety within the budget of the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA).

The House-passed version of Substitute House Bill 166 contains a very modest increase of \$200,000 per fiscal year to the critical Poultry Inspection Line Item (GRF 700415) within the Ohio Department of Agriculture. OPA believes this additional commitment to food safety will be beneficial to all Ohioans.

The Ohio Poultry Association is a non-profit, statewide trade organization that represents more than 600 Ohio egg, chicken and turkey farmers in communities throughout Ohio. Our members create nearly 20,000 jobs annually and generate nearly \$600 million in annual earnings for Ohio's economy. I am also very proud to say that OPA members are very meaningful contributors in many ways to their local communities.

Our member farmers have always been and remain firmly committed to provide safe, affordable, high-quality food not only for Ohioans but consumers around the world. OPA is very proud of the fact that through the years, our members and our organization have viewed our mission as a "partnership" with the Ohio General Assembly in such important areas as food safety and environmental responsibility. For those very reasons, we truly thank the Ohio House for its additional modest investment the Poultry Inspection Line Item. Our association strongly feels that this investment will produce a valuable return to your constituents by enhanced food safety and is quite in line with our mutual goals of a safe, affordable food source for all Ohioans and the world.

OPA applauds ODA Director Dorothy Pelanda and the DeWine Administration for its commitment to food safety in agriculture through their initial overall ODA budget request; most notably their large commitment to greatly enhanced meat inspection measures. OPA and our members believe the additional amount approved by the Ohio House to the Poultry Inspection Line Item is directly reflective of the safety commitments being made by Director Pelanda and Governor DeWine.

The Poultry Inspection Line Item within ODA provides funding for poultry laboratory testing, sample collection and veterinary inspection of live birds transported into the state. This is crucial to not only our industry but all Ohioans because these inspections are vital in helping to prevent and potentially combat avian influenza. In addition, this line item also supports the Ohio Egg Quality Assurance Program, whose focus is to control the very real threat of salmonella. As you can see, this line item plays a very important role to all Ohioans in taking proactive testing and inspection measures to assure that safe, high-quality food can continue to get to your constituents.

On behalf of OPA's 600 egg, chicken and turkey farmers and their families, I thank you for consideration of maintaining the additional investment made by the Ohio House to help continue the great work that is being done by our laboratory partners in the area of food safety through the Poultry Inspection Line Item. Our association realizes putting together a large biennial budget is very difficult, and we appreciate the many funding requests you have and will continue to receive. However, we believe the additional monies entrusted to the Poultry Inspection Line Item will show an extremely positive return on a very modest investment.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions. You may also feel free to contact Dan Leite, Rob Eshenbaugh or Courtney Saunders of Capitol Advocates.

Thank you,  
Jim Chakeres  
Executive Director  
Ohio Poultry Association  
707 South Front St.  
Columbus, OH 43206