



Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee
House Bill 166 – Interested Party Testimony

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Shelby County Commissioner

May 15, 2019

Chairman Schuring, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today on House Bill 166. My name is Tony Bornhorst; I am in my seventh year as Shelby County Commissioner and serve on CCAO Ag and Rural Affairs Committee (Vice Chair) and Water Quality Task Force. I am a farmer, former pork producer, a past president of the Ohio Pork Producers Council, and served on the Shelby County Soil and Water Conservation District Board in the 1980's. I am in my 29th year as a 4-H Advisor for the Ft. Loramie Livestock 4-H Club, which my father started in 1951, and six of my fourteen grandchildren are already members of today.

I am here today to speak on behalf of CCAO and its support and my support for several key state-county partnerships included in House Bill 166 that have the ability to strengthen all 88 counties and the state alike.

As you know, agriculture is Ohio's #1 industry, contributing over \$100 billion annually to the state's economy. A strong agriculture industry benefits all 88 counties, whether they be urban, rural or someplace in between. Counties work collaboratively with the state and other partners to promote agriculture's strengths while also addressing its challenges. The following are areas where renewed collaboration and investment, in my opinion, will lead to fruitful results.

Soil and Water Conservation

Addressing Ohio's complex water quality challenges requires input and investment from many sources. The federal, state, and local governments along with the agricultural industry all must play a role in protecting Ohio's water resources. For CCAO, improving water quality begins with funding the boots on the ground at Ohio's Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD). SWCDs provide expert assistance to both agricultural



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and urban stakeholders in all 88 counties. Having boots on the ground is a fundamental key to implementing nutrient best management practices.

SWCDs work with the farmer on a farm to farm basis to reduce nutrient loss, a key driver of harmful algal bloom development. County SWCDs leverage federal funding from the USDA and other entities to supplement local stakeholder dollars to meet farm by farm, town by town and city by city needs to better protect the water quality of our streams, rivers and lakes.

CCAO has long supported a county-state 1:1 funding match for SWCDs. In the previous state budget, however, the state match rate had fallen to a low of 70 percent. CCAO is pleased to see the additional \$5 million state investment in the Soil and Water Conservation District line item which would bring the state match rate closer to its 1:1 goal.

Extension Funding

OSU Extension has a leading role in the research and educational efforts to address water quality challenges across the state. Extension educators have trained over 17,000 farmers on the 4R nutrient stewardship principles. Edge of field monitoring studies in Northwest Ohio are providing critical information in identifying how nutrients are leaving our farms and are key to identifying practices to reduce and stop that nutrient loss. When facing the complex challenge of how to improve water quality, Extension is a valuable source of scientific information that farmers can trust.

Extension's 4-H program is a point of pride for many counties. Over 250,000 youth participate in 4-H in some capacity each year. The leadership and educational skills our young people attain through 4-H programming prepare them for their future educational and workforce endeavors, which ultimately strengthen our communities and state. Being the second generation of now four generations of the Bornhorst family involved in 4-H, I am proud to say that 4-H is a sound investment in our county's and state's future.

CCAO and I support increasing the level of state support for Extension to further water quality outreach and to supplement state cost share for those counties which desire more Extension programming. I will add that there are currently 12 counties requesting additional matching funds to expand Extension programming in their counties, but those matching dollars are not available.

OARDC, CFAES & Sea Grant

OARDC, the Ohio Agriculture Research and Development Center, is the research arm of the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences of The Ohio State University and focuses on scientific disciplines critical to food security, the environment, human health, and pest management. The key to Ohio's competitiveness in the agricultural industry is continued support of innovation through this program. OARDC

partners with producers, industry, government and citizens to explore new products and approaches; enhance profitability for agricultural businesses; and to maximize the impact on the health of the environment and human life. CCAO supports additional funding to further OARDC's monitoring and research efforts in the fight against harmful algal blooms.

Ohio Sea Grant is supported by the Ohio General Assembly, and that investment leverages federal funds. Sea Grant monitors and coordinates efforts to enhance the health of Lake Erie which supports a multi-billion tourism industry.

H2Ohio Funding

Improving water quality across Ohio, whether it be the Western Lake Erie Basin, the Ohio River or points in between, will likely require investment in nutrient loss prevention and technology, wetlands restoration, and ongoing monitoring and research. The proposed H2Ohio Fund would begin to provide the needed investment into these critical areas.

Ohio's water quality challenges did not develop overnight and resulting improvements may be difficult to initially measure. However, by closely monitoring progress against established metrics that account for mother nature's natural variations, I believe we can make meaningful progress in improving water quality across the state.

CCAO supports the many agricultural producers who utilize best management practices to reduce nutrient runoff. These producers should be recognized for their efforts to improve water quality, and I would like to add that Bornhorst Bros. was recognized in 2000 as a National Pork Industry Environmental Stewardship award winner, one of four farms nationwide, and I am very proud of that recognition. Likewise, there should be a continued emphasis and attention on those agricultural producers who do not utilize best management practices or make the protection of water quality a priority on their operations

I thank you for your time and consideration. I would be glad to answer any questions you may have for me.