



**Representative Paula Hicks-Hudson  
44<sup>th</sup> Ohio House District  
Sponsor Testimony House Bill 592**

Good Morning Chair Koekler, Vice Chair Creech, Ranking Member Brent and my colleagues of the best committee in the Ohio House of Representatives, the Agricultural and Conservation Committee. I am extremely excited and grateful for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on HB 592 which would establish the Urban Farmer Youth Initiative Pilot Program.

HB 592 is part of a national effort to restore, educate, and improve the lives of the next generation of farmers. As many of you know from some of my conversations with you, I grew up in Hamilton, Ohio where my father, who was part of the Great Northern Migration, operated a dry cleaners and carryout. In the back of the store, my dad planted a garden that included beans, greens, corn, sweet potatoes, etc. One growing season he even tried his hand at growing cotton. As a kid, I didn't understand how important it was for our family to have that garden and provide fresh and wholesome food to our family and our community.

My father carried on this tradition with his grand kids and had a garden into his 90's. While he did not sell the produce that we grew, he and my mother gave it away to others in need. But his love of the land and the benefits of this activity have come full circle to this present time.

"Food insecurity is real and children know about it at a young age". This quote came from a young woman who taught herself how to use food as medicine to heal herself and others. For many summers, she has pioneered a summer program for children from age 5-18. Last year, over 60 children participated in a summer of learning, planting, tending and harvesting. These urban kids were excited to taste the fruits and vegetables that they had a hand in growing. She has developed curriculum and connections with farmers, neighbors and others to create a program to show kids how to create a supply system from farm to product development.

HB 592 will educate urban youth between six and eighteen years of age about farming in an urban setting. It will include an appropriation of \$500,000 to be distributed over a two year period. These funds will be used by the Central State and Ohio State Extension Offices to provide relevant programming and support to urban youth with regard to farming and agriculture. They will also coordinate with those persons who are currently working to educate young people about farming.

This joint effort with our two land grant universities will provide needed information on how we can attract urban youth to a career in agricultural and food production. While the traditional farming educational programs have merit, this pilot program is geared for the urban youth farmer who may not have the opportunities and challenges that the traditional 4-H programs have had in urban areas.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to give testimony on HB 592. I am happy to answer any questions the Committee has.