

Tia Stuart
The Narrow Way Farm
Proponent Interested Party Testimony for House Bill 592
House Agriculture and Conservation Committee
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Chairman Koehler, Vice Chairman Creech, Ranking Member Brent, and Members of the Ohio House Agriculture and Conservation Committee, my name is Tia Stuart, owner/operator of The Narrow Way Farm. Thank you for the opportunity to present Proponent Interested Party Testimony on HB 592.

As a farmer, Ag educator and mother, I believe that all people, especially children, should have the ability to connect with the land where they are living and learn about their food system as a whole. Traditionally, Ag education, specifically farming, has been largely reserved for those residing in rural areas. House Bill 592 seeks to begin to change this inequality by providing much needed funding for young people located in urban areas.

There are many reasons why children should have an opportunity to contribute to their food system by learning how to farm, but I'll just name a few.

Farming teaches children where their food comes from and how it is grown. Many children living in urban settings do not know where most of their food comes from. While they may know that food is grown on "a farm" the only place that they truly come in contact with food is at grocery stores or restaurants. Food growing on a farm is a generic idea that is disconnected from the reality of where and how their food is grown. Obviously, this needs to change.

Farming helps teach children to have a greater appreciation for food. Spending time growing food often changes the way children see it. Being rewarded with the fruits of their labor is exciting and they are more likely not to waste it. They are also more likely to taste something new that they grew themselves or helped grow, which results in a greater variety of healthy fresh fruits and vegetable in their diets. That in turn can lead to better health outcomes.

Farming helps teaches children responsibility: Caring for plants properly and consistently is essential for raising quality herbs and produce. Starting seeds, watering, fertilizing, weed and pest control, harvesting... these are just a few basic responsibilities that are part of farming. My own children share these responsibilities with my husband and have grown up knowing how important their role is in the production of the food that feeds us, our extended family, and our neighbors. Every child should have this pleasure, not just children living in rural areas.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony on House Bill 592. I urge the Committee's favorable consideration of the bill. I am now open for questions or comments.