



House Commerce and Labor Committee House Bill 146 – Proponent Testimony

Chairman Stein, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and Members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 146 on behalf of the Ohio Fair Managers Association.

My name is Howard Call and I am a Past President of the Ohio Fair Managers Association (OFMA) and I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Association. The OFMA is the statewide association representing Ohio's 95, county, independent fairs and the Ohio State Fair. I am proud to be a board member of the Summit County Fair in Tallmadge, Ohio.

As you well know, county and independent fairs are the cornerstone event for many communities. We are a showcase for Ohio's agriculture and 4-H programs and we provide an opportunity for families to have fun together. Ohio has a long tradition of supporting county fairs and our members pride themselves on offering a great event for their communities.

As you can imagine, county fairs run their operations on very slim margins. Nobody serves on their local fair board to get rich! We do so because we have pride in agriculture, pride in strong family values, and a determination to offer a great event for our citizens.

We do what we can to be creative with our resources. Many of our members volunteer their time and go above and beyond regular fair board meetings and duties to assist. However, many of Ohio's fairgrounds are showing their age.

Our members have long wish lists of improvements and modernizations they would like to make to their grounds and facilities. One of the barriers to making some of these investments is complying with Ohio's prevailing wage law. I am sure many on this committee are surprised to learn that Ohio fairs must comply with prevailing wage laws and thresholds. But we are considered political subdivisions under Ohio law, therefore must comply with prevailing wage laws like other local governments.

We have heard from many of our members that complying with these requirements can make projects cost prohibitive. Having to comply with these laws can act as a disincentive for fairs to make major improvements to the grounds and their buildings. This adds costs to projects and many fair board members know that there are local companies who would do the same project for less money. However, these are options that the board has to decline in order to stay in compliance with the law.

Making the prevailing wage laws optional would certainly benefit county agricultural societies. However, this bill would not repeal the law completely. It would open up options for OFMA members when considering and bidding out projects.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the committee, thank you for considering this perspective of the OFMA and taking into consideration our position on HB 146.

Sincerely,

Howard Call, CFE
Executive Director