



Ohio Fair Managers Association
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Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Upchurch and all members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today on behalf of the Ohio Fair Managers Association (OFMA) in support of House Bill 168. My name is Roger Smith and I serve as a district director on the OFMA Board of Directors. My home fair is the Hartford Independent Fair.

The OFMA has been working diligently on behalf of Ohio's 95 county and independent fairs to survive the economic side effects of COVID-19. While not out of the woods yet, we are optimistic that this year will be more prosperous than 2020.

The financial losses sustained in 2020 by county agricultural societies have been difficult to manage. There was some help from the state in the availability of CARES funds in 2020 and we appreciate the legislators' support for that funding. We are asking that you also support the provision of HB 168 that provides an additional infusion of support for our county fairs.

In addition to the losses felt because of the limitation or cancelation of an annual fair exhibition, fairs have also loss rental income. Many groups rent our fairgrounds to host events like swap meets, weddings, antique shows, horse shows, commodity shows and more. Our fairs rely on this income and it was all but lost last year. We estimate that in 2019 our fairs brought in over \$14 million in non-fair related rentals. This funding source dried up in 2020.

We need continued support from the state to help ensure our county fairs are still here for generations to come. We are facing obstacles like never before. Many of our local fairs are hanging on by a financial thread and would very much appreciate your support.

It is important to note, that in addition to supporting our grounds and annual fair exhibition, we provide a financial benefit to our communities on a whole. We have pulled together some financial impact data from our members. We estimate conservatively that fairs generated over \$111 million in economic impact from the county fairs alone. This doesn't take into account other events on the grounds that operate 12 months a year.

Our midways are filled with small businesses selling delicious food and providing other entertainment to our fairgoers. We are a showcase for Junior Fair and provide a showcase for the youth to show and auction their animals and other projects. We are a platform for charities, law enforcement, and other non-profits to reach their communities and also raise funds for their mission. Our communities rely on us and that is why we are here relying on you in the General Assembly.

We thank this committee for your time today and would appreciate your support for House Bill 168.