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Cheryl Subler, Executive Director

House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources
House Bill 110 – Interested Party Testimony

Tony Anderson
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Chairman Kick, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Tony Anderson, and I serve as a Fayette County Commissioner, a position I have held for over 19 years. Outside of my commissioner duties, I am heavily involved in production agriculture, with over 45 years of experience on my family-owned grain farm. I have held several leadership positions in state and federal agriculture associations, including a term as president of the American Soybean Association.

I am here today on behalf of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO) to speak on several key provisions included in House Bill 110 that will strengthen all 88 counties and the state alike.

Soil and Water Conservation

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are critical local partners for counties in addressing natural resource concerns across the state, in both urban and rural settings alike. SWCDs work closely with landowners to prevent soil erosion, manage water resources, and improve soil health and water quality. SWCDs are at the forefront of addressing Ohio's water quality challenges, and SWCD personnel are trusted sources of information for countless agricultural producers.

Counties invest considerable funds to support the work of SWCDs, and it is important that the state likewise support the important work of these entities. CCAO has long supported a 1:1 state-local match for SWCDs, and CCAO is supportive of the funds included in the executive budget proposal towards this effort.

OSU Extension, OARDC & Sea Grant

Ohio State University Extension builds better lives and stronger communities through partnerships and sharing knowledge. It supports Ohio's number one industry, agriculture, and develops future leaders through 4-H youth development. Extension connects the knowledge of the university to Ohioans to benefit their lives, businesses and communities through programming in family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, community development, and agriculture and natural resources.



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Extension's 4-H program is a particular point of pride for many counties. Tens of thousands of young Ohioans participate in 4-H in some capacity each year. The leadership and educational skills our young people acquire through 4-H prepare them for healthy and productive lives and help develop the next generation of local leaders.

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.

Ohio Sea Grant works to protect Lake Erie's health through research, education, outreach and partnerships. Ohio Sea Grant's Stone Laboratory is an important center of scientific research and education for Lake Erie's toughest environmental challenges. As Ohio continues its fight for a healthier Lake Erie, investment in Ohio Sea Grant is important to furthering this effort.

CCAO supports additional state funding for agricultural and water quality research and Extension to ensure greater numbers of Ohioans have access to this knowledge. Counties invest considerable local funds to support Extension, and it is important that counties have a strong partner in the state to support that effort. Restoring Extension, OARDC and Sea Grant to the original funding levels passed in the current budget bill (HB 166) is a worthwhile investment in Ohio's communities, environment and economy.

H2Ohio

Improving water quality across the state is a priority for counties, whether it be Lake Erie's Western Basin, the Ohio River or points in between. Over the past two years, H2Ohio has been an important resource to agricultural producers and communities across the state. Over 1.1 million acres of farmland have been enrolled in nutrient best management practices, dozens of wetland projects are underway and hundreds of failing home septic systems and lead service lines have been replaced. All of these actions promote improved water quality for a healthier environment and healthier citizens.

The executive budget proposal provides \$240 million for the H2Ohio Fund. CCAO is pleased to see continued investment in this important program. Ohio's water quality challenges are complex and will require resources paired alongside accountability measures. The investments contained in the H2Ohio Fund provide the necessary funding, guided by leading scientific research, to produce long-term improvements in Ohio's water resources.

Farmland Preservation

CCAO is pleased to see the executive budget propose \$7 million for farmland preservation. This investment will keep over 3,500 acres of Ohio farmland in active production while allowing farmers and landowners to invest in their operations and land.

This is a good step to keep Ohio's agriculture industry vibrant for future generations to come.

I thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have for me.