

Ohio Senate Finance Committee  
Substitute House Bill 110  
Interested Party Testimony  
May 19, 2021

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee -

As representatives of Ohio livestock and poultry farmers, we submit this testimony urging your support for an amendment, SC 2954, to Sub. H.B. 110 to increase funding for the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Animal Health Programs GRF 700401 by \$2,631,000 in FY '22 and \$2,455,000 in FY '23 to provide for much needed staffing and a client portal system for the Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (ADDL).

Agriculture is the state's number-one industry, contributing \$123.8 billion annually to Ohio's economy, with over 40% of the sales from livestock and poultry farms. In order for the state's animal agriculture industries to remain leading producers in the nation, Ohio needs to make a substantial investment in its animal health infrastructure.

We are aware that the Ohio Department of Agriculture is about to conduct a feasibility study to build a new laboratory, and proposed some additional ADDL staffing in the state's operating budget. However, more staffing and a client portal system at the ADDL are needed now even before a new laboratory is built.

Ohio's farmers pay for the services they use from the ADDL and are currently sending a significant amount of their tests to states such as Iowa and Minnesota because Ohio's ADDL cannot meet the existing demand let alone the anticipated future growth. This results in lost revenue and a missed opportunity for increased economic activity in Ohio's agricultural industry.

Livestock and poultry diseases are one of the most significant threats to animal production, food safety, and the general farm economy. Ohio's farmers and ranchers rely on Ohio's ADDL for safe animal movement, diagnosis of diseases, and confirmation of the state's livestock and poultry's health status.

The ability of Ohio's ADDL to deliver early detection and active surveillance in the management and control of animal disease is vital. If Ohio's ADDL cannot meet the needs of the industry, the state's economic health and meat supply will be in jeopardy. The success of Ohio's livestock and poultry industries is directly correlated with the success of the Ohio's ADDL.

On behalf of Ohio's livestock and poultry industries, we specifically bring awareness of the following issues:

- Our farmer members praise the entire ADDL staff's dedication and willingness to go the extra mile to deliver services during these challenging times. Yet, the strain of an overstretched team is concerning. Shorthanded staff, coupled with outdated technology and limited selection of testing options, handicap business growth of the ADDL. These

factors hinder the ability to keep pace with the growth of the livestock and poultry industries.

- Rapid detection is necessary to control and treat disease and is critical for safe animal and food product movement. The disparity in the timing of the results and the limited testing options are the leading reasons 80% of swine and dairy samples are conducted at out-of-state laboratories.
- Ohio's ADDL plays an essential role during foreign animal disease (FAD) outbreaks. Early detection and active surveillance in the management and control of livestock and poultry diseases are vital for safe animal and food product movement. In a FAD outbreak, a bottleneck will occur in labs. Secure Pork, Poultry, and Egg Plans will be impracticable if ADDL lab capabilities and capacity are not improved.
- The investment in a client portal system - allowing customers to submit and receive information electronically - will enhance customer service and reduce paperwork.
- The value of the ODA ADDL is maintaining its status as a USDA National Animal Health Laboratory (NAHL) Network – Level 1 Laboratory. The lab's accreditation is at risk if investment for skilled scientists and lab technicians is not at a sustainable level.

As an issue of significant importance, we respectfully ask for your favorable support of additional investment in the state's animal health program. The future economic growth of agriculture in Ohio is dependent on an ADDL capable of meeting the industry's demands.

Sincerely,

