

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, my name is Dr. Bethany Heitkamp, Veterinarian at Cooper Farms. Growing healthy turkeys, egg layers and hogs and producing quality, affordable food products has been a tradition for the Cooper family of northwest Ohio for over three generations. Founded in 1938 by Virgil and Virginia Cooper, Cooper Farms is still family owned and operated. Today, with the help of our more than 2,200 team members, Cooper Farms is a leading food supplier, selling a variety of fully cooked and ready-to-cook turkey, ham and chicken products to customers throughout North America.

On behalf of the poultry and pork industry in Ohio, I 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, supplies, and a client portal system for the Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (ADDL).

As a veterinarian, I have seen the need for testing increases over time, but funding for the labs has not kept pace. 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.

For the poultry industry, the threat of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza is real. The industry works diligently to avoid a similar situation to the outbreak of 2015 which resulted in the loss of millions of birds. This loss was not only to the industry, but to consumers as they saw decreased availability of product and increased prices. The conditions in Europe and Asia are similar to what we saw in 2013 and 2014, prior to the U.S. outbreak. Wild birds overlapping the American and European flyways are the main vector of disease introduction. Routine laboratory surveillance is key to prevention. A fully funded and fully staffed ADDL is critical for this surveillance to happen.

For the swine industry, an introduction of a foreign animal disease is a real threat as well. Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus was introduced into the United States swine herd in 2013 and resulted in the loss of millions of pigs. Today, we are watching the impact of African Swine Fever in China, Russia, and countries in Europe. Currently, the United States is preparing and planning for an ASF outbreak in the unfortunate event that it ever reaches this country. If a foreign animal disease (FAD) were to enter the U.S. swine herd, it would cause billions of dollars in losses due to animal deaths, depopulation, disposal, and cleanup costs. It would also immediately close the export markets. A market on which U.S. pork producers depend, as thirty percent of pork production is exported. According to Iowa State University economists, an ASF outbreak in the United States would cause an estimated 40-50% drop in hog prices, reduce the demand for feedstuffs such as corn and soybeans, and result in significant job loss.

Livestock and poultry diseases are one of the most significant threats to animal production, food safety, and the general farm economy. Ohio's farmers rely on Ohio's ADDL for safe animal movement, diagnosis of diseases, and confirmation of the state's livestock and poultry's health status. As a veterinarian at one of the largest pork and poultry producers in the United States, I urge that you support the amendment to the budget that will increase ADDL.