

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

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the committee, I am Dr. Mark Hardesty and I am testifying today on behalf of the Ohio Dairy Veterinarians Association 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 staffing and a client portal system for the Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (ADDL).

I have a BS in Dairy Science, an MS in Dairy Management and Nutrition, and a DVM—all from The Ohio State University. I was a third-generation dairy farmer in Auglaize County before I pursued my veterinary education.

My wife, Dr. Michelle Michalak, and I have owned the Maria Stein Animal Clinic in Mercer county since 1988. During our tenure it has grown from a solo practice to 8 doctors with 3 small animal clinics. Half of the practice is dairy with some hogs, beef and small ruminants. We influence 40,000 cows, 10,000 in Indiana, but still the largest dairy practice in Ohio. You can see our trucks north to Delta and Hicksville, east to Kidron, south to Chillicothe, and west to the Illinois line. We have a great group of young doctors that expect to provide service to these clients for many years.

Practice and agriculture are becoming more science based and farms are becoming larger, which is increasing the demand for rapid, accurate diagnostics to make better treatment and prevention decisions. Time is more than money. It maintains or loses the trust that clients place in their veterinarians to assist them with the challenges they face. The number one reason for us to use a diagnostic lab is for diagnosis of on farm disease conditions. We send out these samples almost daily but do not currently use ODA for this work. Lack of timeliness lost that business. We would send off samples and we would wait. Clients would call. We would call ODA. There were no results. We submit the majority of our cattle samples to Wisconsin and get some results in 2 to 3 days with finals within a week. ODA has taken up to 3 weeks. We don't need results at that point, the cattle are either dead or better. It is also important that the diagnostic personnel protect the Veterinarian Client relationship. It was routine for one ODA pathologist to write on the report things like, "Samples not submitted properly." We normally forward reports directly to our clients daily. How do I send that report to them? When we have called to discuss cases with a pathologist, we have been disappointed. Sometimes it is very helpful, but often we get an academic perspective rather than one from experience. Sometimes we are left to wonder if the pathologist was grasping at an explanation and sometimes there is a communication barrier. We're going to trust the perspective of a nationally known disease specialist over someone that might be making it up as they go.

Regarding regulatory samples, we had a very loyal exporter that submitted 20,000 sets of 5 tests through ODA in 2011 and 2012. We had only a few issues, but when we worked with another exporter, all samples went through South Dakota State. They would call in extra personnel such that samples from a Monday bleed they received on Tuesday or even Wednesday morning gave us BLV results by Wednesday afternoon or evening so positive animals could be sorted when we read the TB tests on Thursday. Saving clients and cattle an extra trip through the chute is a big deal on thousands of head. SD got all of our export business, even on smaller jobs. We have submitted a few regulatory samples to ODA recently and have been pleasantly surprised that results from some tests came back in a timely

manner. We would like to see the lab thrive, but we must serve our client. If that means we ship out of state, so be it. We have had staff go beyond expectations as recently Ann Parkinson met us at the lab on a Sunday to take in samples. This is exemplary, but Wisconsin has regular Saturday receiving.

Most of this is all about the people, us knowing them and trusting them. Are there enough people to do the job? Are they trained to do the job? It's been awhile since I called in but there was certainly a time when you felt like you were being answered by a loading dock not by a receptionist that had a complete knowledge of the offerings and workings of the lab.

If the plan is to enhance the ODA ADDL facilities at some time in the future, the time is now to get people in place that prompt us to send in samples. By the time a building is built, the lab will have lost even more critical mass of cases that are needed for it to run in the black.

Does the largest dairy practice in Ohio need an ODA ADDL? Probably not as much as the lab needs us. We can continue to send diagnostics out of state. Does it make sense for a thriving livestock producing state to have a vibrant diagnostic lab? Most certainly. Iowa just built a new one and they are reaching out for more work. Many have mentioned Foreign Animal Disease. This threat has always been with us but never as much as now. Ohio passed Iowa in egg production for a few weeks during the devastation of High Path Avian Influenza. I know the apprehension of waiting for those results. I recently had a mimic virus outbreak in a high genetics herd of Holsteins. Dr. Jamie Davis and ODA did an exemplary job of helping us know that we did not have Foot and Mouth Disease. I am pretty sure those results could not have been replicated if Dr. Davis had several locations to serve that day.

I have a concern that I need on record regarding customer portals. These need to function through and be facilitated by the practicing veterinarian. If customers submit without guidance, resources will be wasted and results will suffer. Some portals disclose testing costs. Some veterinarians will charge a line item for diagnostic interpretation while many apply a markup to the lab charges. Veterinarians are eager to interpret diagnostic information but they must also achieve some financial return or it is not sustainable. This is the substance of what veterinary education is applied to.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my personal and professional experiences on this matter and on behalf of the Ohio Dairy Veterinarians Association, we support the increase funding of \$2,631,000 in fiscal year 2022 and \$2,455,000 in Fiscal Year 2023. I am happy to answer any questions.