



Stronger Counties. Stronger Ohio.

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Cheryl Subler, Executive Director

Senate Local Government and Elections Committee
House Bill 110 – Interested Party Testimony

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Chair Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath and members of the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Tony Bornhorst, and I serve as a Shelby County Commissioner, a position I have held for nine years. Outside of my commissioner duties, I am a farmer, former pork producer, a past president of the Ohio Pork Producers Council, and I have served on the Shelby County Soil and Water Conservation District Board. I have also been a 4-H advisor for the Ft. Loramie Livestock 4-H Club for over 30 years.

I am here today on behalf of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO) to speak on several key agricultural and rural affairs 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 state budget proposal toward this effort.

OSU Extension, OARDC & Sea Grant

Ohio State University Extension builds better lives and stronger communities through partnerships and the sharing of knowledge. Extension supports Ohio's number one industry, agriculture, and develops future leaders through 4-H youth development. It strengthens local communities through programming in family and consumer sciences. It supports 4-H youth development, community development, and agriculture and natural resources – all key building blocks to stronger counties and a stronger Ohio.



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Counties invest significant county resources into Extension services, and a strong commitment to Extension funding from the state is critical maintaining and expanding these important programs. CCAO is supportive of additional state resources for Extension purposes.

The Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC), is the research arm of the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences of The Ohio State University. A 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; enhances profitability for agricultural businesses; and maximizes the impact on the health of the environment and human life. CCAO supports state investment in this critical engine of innovation for Ohio's agriculture industry.

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.

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.

CCAO supports continued investment in this important program. Ohio's water quality challenges are complex and 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.

Broadband

CCAO is supportive of Governor DeWine and the General Assembly's efforts to increase access to broadband service across our state. Access to affordable and reliable broadband service is a key concern in many rural counties of the state and even in some urban settings as well. The considerable broadband investment in the governor's proposed Investing in Ohio Initiative will allow additional Ohioans to access the occupational, educational, and telehealth benefits that modern broadband internet provides.

Farmland Preservation

Finally, CCAO is supportive of state investment for farmland preservation. These investments keep thousands of 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 ensure Ohio's agriculture industry remains 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.