

Chairman Klopfenstein, Vice Chair (whoever receives designation), Ranking Member Brent and members of the House Agriculture Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 503 today.

HB 503 addresses Ohio's growing feral swine infestation. This is already a major problem in Ohio. Feral swine carry diseases that can wipe out entire droves of healthy hogs. Unfortunately, that is only the tip of the iceberg. We have already seen this balloon to an unsolvable point. This has happened in Texas, Georgia and Arkansas among other states. Once the population grows into hundreds of thousands or millions of hogs in a state, they can cause millions of dollars in property damage, cost millions of taxpayer dollars to attempt to remove and destroy plants and wildlife. The State of Texas currently has a \$321B budget just for feral hog mitigation.

The central point of HB 503 is to give landowners the right to solve this problem. Under the bill, landowners would have the right to kill a feral hog at any time without a license. The only requirements for killing the hog are notifying ODNR within 24 hours and following the rules for preservation and disposal of the corpse. It also requires ODNR be notified within 24 hours if a feral hog is spotted and prohibits importing, transporting or possessing live wild boar or feral swine.

Finally, HB 503 attacks the problem of garbage feeding hogs, which can attract and sustain a feral hog population. The bill eliminates an existing license to feed swine garbage or treated garbage, which nobody in the state holds currently. Lastly, it prohibits bringing swine into the state who have been garbage fed. Should the Department of Agriculture receive a tip that swine are being fed garbage, they have a right to investigate it.

Each of these proposed laws carry a penalty of a 1<sup>st</sup> degree misdemeanor with the exclusion of, importing, transporting or possessing of feral swine, which carries a 5<sup>th</sup> degree felony. The Department of Agriculture is also granted the right to assess a civil penalty of \$500 for feeding swine garbage with a max penalty of \$1000 for subsequent violation.

Michael Bodenchuck, the director of Texas Wildlife Services stated, "There is not enough government money to kill all the pigs in Texas," in reference to Texas' feral hog problem. We need to be proactive instead of reactive, so this issue does not reach an unsolvable point, as it has in other states.

I would like to thank you for allowing me testify today and ask for your support for this bill.