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OhioPork.org

Ohio House Agriculture Committee
House Bill 503
Proponent Testimony
June 4, 2024

Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Klopfenstein, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the House Agriculture Committee on behalf of Ohio's pig farmers, the Ohio Pork Council is in support of House Bill 503.

My name is Cheryl Day, Executive Vice President of the Ohio Pork Council. I'm proud to serve the nearly 3,400 farm families that raise nutrient-dense, sustainable pork across our great state. The Ohio Pork Industry is a major economic contributor to the state of Ohio creating an estimated \$1.4 billion in value-added activity, \$3.4 billion in sales, 28,000 jobs, and \$115.2 million in local and state taxes.

To help protect Ohio's family farmers and the positive impact that Ohio's Pork Industry brings to the state, feral swine (aka wild pigs) must be stopped and eliminated. These animals are an invasive, non-native species in Ohio, posing a significant threat to the state's pork production by spreading diseases and causing extensive damage to the land, crops, and water.

House Bill 503 aims to prohibit the import of feral swine into Ohio, halt the hunting of feral swine, and put an end to risky practice of garbage feeding of swine.

According to official reports by U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services, the ecological and economic losses from feral swine damage in the U.S. are estimated to be greater than \$1.5 billion each year. However, the stakes are much higher as this cost would be far less than the potential damage from an outbreak of a foreign animal disease such as African swine fever (ASF) or foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), which these animals could easily and quickly transfer to our commercial herds.

The damage to Ohio's land, crops, soil, and water alone justifies the passing of House Bill 503. Additionally, the potential for these non-native, disease-spreading vectors to harm Ohio's farm families' livelihoods is extremely concerning.

African swine fever is currently less than 800 miles away from entering the United States and has a presence in 50-plus countries. Given this reality, our best defense as a state is to take all necessary action to prevent ASF from getting into Ohio. If we fail and ASF strikes, the U.S. pork export market would halt, and domestic hog prices would immediately drop by 50-60%, putting



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our farmers and all related industries at great financial risk. Experts predict that even with good post-event management, it could take 2-10 years to recover from an ASF outbreak, which is why preventive steps are so critical now.

The control and elimination of feral swine from Ohio's land is a much-needed progressive step in protecting Ohio's farms, jobs, economy, taxes, and natural resources.

We urge you to approve House Bill 503.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Day