



OHIO DAIRY PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

*Supporting Ohio's dairy production industry; optimizing profitability and productivity;
addressing issues that affect dairy producers*

Ohio House Agriculture Committee
Proponent Testimony
Scott Higgins, CEO, Ohio Dairy Producers Association
House Bill 503
June 4, 2024

Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Klopfenstein, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of House Bill 503, which will eliminate the feeding of garbage to swine, stops the importation of feral swine into Ohio, and prohibits the hunting of feral swine in the state. This legislation was a collaboration between the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR).

My name is Scott Higgins and I am the CEO of the Ohio Dairy Producers Association (ODPA). ODPA supports this legislation to reduce the risk of disease getting into Ohio's livestock population and we ask for the Committee to pass this bill. We also want to thank Representatives Peterson and Jones for taking up this important legislation.

By way of background, the ODPA is a grassroots legislative, research, and producer education organization, representing dairy farmers from across the state, regardless of farm size, breed or production strategy, marketing preference, or political affiliation. Ohio is home to 251,000 dairy cows that live on 1,450 farms and produce 642 million gallons of milk annually, with a \$30 billion total economic impact of dairy products produced and sold in Ohio, generating 133,200 jobs for Ohioans.

Ohio is ranked 11 in total milk production in the nation, and 5th in the number of processing and receiving plants. And as a fun fact, Ohio is #1 in Swiss cheese and #2 in lowfat cottage cheese production.

HB 503 will properly address the nuisance of feral swine, which are hard to control. Fencing and other barriers do not keep feral swine out. Ohio's garbage feeding license existed for many years, however no one has applied to ODA for the license. If African Swine Flu (ASF) makes its way into feral swine or wild boar populations, it is only a matter of time before it gets inside pork barns. ASF is catastrophic to producers, forcing producers to fully depopulate, resulting in a terrible business loss and disruption in our food supply.

We stand in solidarity with Ohio pork farmers to protect their animals from harmful disease. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony for your consideration.