



873 Clover Drive
Columbus, Ohio 43235
December 8, 2024

Testimony for House Bill 568 (Healthy Soils Task Force Bill)

Chairman Jones, Vice Chairman Klopfenstein, and Ranking Member Brant:

Thank you in advance for reading my thoughts and deeply held values.

As a teacher, food gardener, garden designer, and steward of the land I have always been surprised by the lack of awareness of the importance of soil. It is the foundation of our food systems. Its biome/biological community matches our biome/biological community. Soil has served as our birthplace and will receive us, one way or the other, when we die.

I have channeled much of my teaching and speaking career into helping gardeners and members of the landscape industry to understand the science of soil and then how to work with nature to support natural processes that have worked for eons before we humans changed the script.

Now we need to regenerate what we have changed and protect what we build. We cannot go back to what soil was – because that is impossible – but we need to build healthy soil by working with nature instead of against it. And then we need to protect what we regenerate.

To do this we need a task force that focuses on soil, will identify best practices, and will set up procedures to implement these practices as defined in House Bill 568, Section D.

I appeal to you, members of the legislature of a state where agriculture – rural and urban – comprises approximately 49% of our state’s 29 million acres of land (“The State of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Ohio”, The Ohio State University, College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, 2020), to support House Bill 568 and the creation of a Healthy Soils Task Force.

With respect,
Debra L Knapke, MS - Horticulture
The Garden Sage LLC – Designer, Consultant, Speaker, Author, and Educator