



House Economic and Workforce Development Committee
SB 226 Proponent Testimony
Evan Callicoa, Director of State Policy
November 19, 2024

Chairman Lorenz, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch, and other honorable members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on SB 226. Our members have grown much more concerned about foreign ownership in recent years. Any threat to Ohio farmland is one that our members and OFBF take very seriously.

Land owned by foreign adversaries is only the latest threat to protecting farmland not just in Ohio, but across the country. In the most recent "Ag Census" published by the US Department of Agriculture, Ohio has lost nearly 300,000 acres of farmland in the last 5 years. In most if not all cases, that land will never be able to be productive farmland again, which is a unique issue that our industry faces compared to others. As Ohio continues to face economic, housing, and energy development pressures, our organization hopes to engage with all sectors for effective land use management. We are thankful to the sponsors and the General Assembly's interest in this issue. Still, land held by foreign adversaries is only one of many factors contributing to farmland loss, and we encourage the General Assembly to look at this issue holistically and help Ohio's number one industry continue to flourish.

Congress has also introduced bipartisan legislation hoping to address this issue through the AFIDA Improvements Act of 2024 (S. 3666), co-sponsored by both of Ohio's Senators. That bill aims to strengthen current law on reporting of foreign ownership by expanding data collection and enforcement against suspected non-filers. Without having real-time data, it is impossible to know the true threat to Ohio and American agriculture from foreign adversaries.

I thank Senator Johnson for introducing this legislation and the committee for allowing OFBF to provide testimony today. I'd be happy to answer any questions at this time.