



**House Finance Committee  
HB 683 Proponent Testimony  
Evan Callicoa, Director of State Policy  
November 19th, 2024**

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and other members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 683. This bill will help provide many farmers stability as they continue to deal with the impacts of this year's drought, and they will for years to come. For an industry that consistently runs on thin margins and is literally at the whim of nature, this money has the potential to save family farms. This is not hyperbole but the truth. Farm income is projected to be down nearly 25% across the country this year. The drought has forced many multi-generational family farms to sell off part of their operation and passion just to put food on the table.

Agriculture is no stranger to hard times. Ohio agriculture is no stranger to hard times. But no matter how many hard times we may have been through, sometimes an event happens where "getting through" isn't an option. For many livestock farmers, especially in SE Ohio, this nightmare has become a reality in 2024. The drought has decimated pastures, causing farmers to start buying and feeding hay months before they usually would. In some counties, over 100,000 gallons of water is trucked in DAILY, yes daily, just to keep herds alive.

This bill is not recreating the wheel, nor is it allocating millions of dollars for years to come. The bill allocates essential dollars to Soil and Water Conservation Districts which will be able to distribute them to those most in need. Rep. Jones brought together all the proponents of this bill to answer an immediate need not only for his constituents but many people who don't even know his name. Similar to a role that many of Farm Bureau's Organization Directors go through often. They are the Farm Bureau's "on-the-ground staff," helping our members make Farm Bureaus an integral part of the communities they serve and an integral part of our organization. I've brought along my friend, Ashley Kasler, one of these ODs as we call them, who has had a front-row seat to this drought since the beginning.