



Ohio Fair Managers Association
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Chairman Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to express the Ohio Fair Managers Association's (OFMA) support of House Bill 135. The OFMA is the statewide association representing Ohio's 95, county fairs, independent fairs and the Ohio State Fair.

HB 135 would require schools to allow students to take excused absences from class for 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) activities. These programs are encouraging the future generation to continue the farming and agriculture traditions of this state. It is important that these students are empowered to participate in these activities without fear of any repercussions for their traditional education and studies.

The Junior Fair activities are the premier events at our fairs for the Ohio youth to shine a spotlight on the work they did on the projects. Whether that be livestock, crafting, cooking or STEM activities, all youth participating gain important experience. They learn useful tools they can carry with them for a lifetime, for example: the importance of animal health, commitment to deadlines and completing projects, good sportsmanship, etc. We need to promote and encourage these traits in Ohioans! Not all learning happens in the classroom and students who are committing their time to participate in these projects and programs, need to feel supported by their schools as well.

This bill is particularly important because more schools are returning to class earlier in the summer. We have included the 2023 county fair schedule as an addendum to this testimony. Please note the high number of fairs that are held in August, September and even into October. These 4-H and FFA participants should never be made to feel like attending the fair to showcase their work is a sacrifice to their K-12 education. These activities should be complementary to their education and development as young citizens. We know many school districts are supportive of these students during the week of the fair, but creating a statewide standard that these absences will be excused is important.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, the OFMA appreciates your consideration and hope the legislation is favorably passed.