

Mr. Chairman, Madam Vice-Chairman, and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity today to speak on a bill that matters to not only me, but the over 62,000 members of 4-H and 27,000 Ohio FFA members.

My name is Dalton Black. I'm a former 10 year 4-H member, a graduate of the Ohio Valley FFA chapter class of 2019 and a recent graduate of Morehead State University. I wanted to reach out to you as an agriculturist, 4-H advisor, livestock enthusiast and youth advocate to ask for you to support House Bill 135 which would allow 4-H and FFA activities to be excused by Ohio schools.

As a kid, I remember being taken out of school for 4-H activities throughout the winter while showing beef cattle in the Ohio Cattlemen's BEST program. I remember making trips with my former county extension agent to Columbus to advocate for 4-H funding in 2015 right here in this very building. In high school, I took educational trips for conventions, leadership summits, even a trip to Phoenix and Denver on behalf of the Ohio FFA to judge in the general livestock category. Along the way I have met many people all across the United States who have helped me become the person I am today.

What has it meant for me to be a former 4-H and FFA member? Both programs have taught me communication and leadership skills. It has taught me to be efficient, responsible, respectful and other skills that have allowed me to expand and improve my communities. I can say for certain without either, I never would have become a 4-H advisor, a livestock judge, or even a candidate for the 90th district when Mr. Baldrige was newly appointed as the Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

Above all, both programs have allowed me to become a volunteer in my community. Most of the time, you can find me serving on a committee or helping other organizations out. In 2019, I was asked to join the Southern Ohio Showdown board to help plan, implement and manage shows across the Southern Ohio area. Over the course of 4 years, our committee conducted 36 shows which impacted over 200 youth exhibitors throughout the State of Ohio. It is organizations such as these that made my time in 4-H and FFA worth so much to me, and I truly believe that by having opportunities outside the classroom, we can help create and motivate the next generation of leaders.

Questions?