

TESTIMONY OF JAMES SAVAGE

Re: HB 33 removal of ODNR private land services funding

Good morning, Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee. My name is Jim Savage, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of ODNR's budget.

I manage my family's woodland in Ross and Vinton Counties. We grow hardwood timber and work to improve wildlife habitat. I ask you to reinstate the 2.4 million for private land management services removed by the House from the FY 24-25 Budget.

When I took over after my father's death in 2004, I had no idea what to do with 430 acres of woods. Fortunately, ODNR had a private lands forester to help me navigate the complicated process of managing woodlands. We walked our property and he pointed out significant problems with the woodlands (too many bad trees and woody invasive plants).

He referred me to a consulting forester for a management plan that identified ways to accelerate the growth of the good trees, the best time to harvest them and how to improve wildlife diversity. I learned from my private lands forester how to pay for and implement my management plan through federal cost share programs. He referred me to the right people at the right agencies and told me when and how to apply. I could not have accessed those programs without his help.

After years of woodland improvement projects, we were able to sell timber 8 years ago. We sold about \$75,000 of timber, on 70 acres, from white oak veneer for export to chips for the nearby paper mill. The buyer provided work for 10 loggers for three weeks. We plan another sale soon.

Family tree farms like ours are the lifeblood of Ohio's yearly \$28.8 Billion woodland products industry. Just over one third of Ohio is wooded and over 80% of those acres are owned by private parties, overwhelmingly individuals and families. But only a few of us are forestry professionals. Most of us do not understand the potential of our woodlands. We need the

help of private land foresters to maximize the economic potential of our woodlands. Without reinstatement of the Division of Forestry's GRF, the availability of this assistance, already stretched thin, will not be available to many people like me. I submit that the economic ripple effect of this modest GRF will pay for itself many times over in increased woodland production.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you again for giving me the opportunity to testify about ODNR's budget. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.