



Ohio Fair Managers Association  
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Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today. My name is Roger Smith, and I am a District Director of the Ohio Fair Managers Association (OFMA). The OFMA is the statewide association representing Ohio's 95, county fairs, independent fairs and the Ohio State Fair.

I want to first say a sincere thank you to the members of the Ohio legislature for your support of Ohio's fairs. We have seen historic investment from the state to support your agricultural societies. This helped us not only weather through COVID but begin to address some of the deferred maintenance on our grounds through the capital grant programs you have approved. But you haven't only shown support through state funds. We see you visiting our county and independent fairs, manning booths on the midway, supporting our concessions and most importantly the kids exhibiting their 4-H projects. We know many of you have 4-H champion banners displayed in your offices showing your support for those auctions at the fairs that provide tremendous assistance to Ohio's youth.

I am here today to support the House passed version of House Bill 33. I want to highlight a couple of the important changes made during the House process and request those be retained in the Senate version of the budget. This bill provides for an important increase in the Ohio Department of Agriculture budget line, GRF 700501, that is used to reimburse county and independent agricultural societies for their Junior Fair activities. Historically, the funding level has been roughly 29% of the actual cost to fairs. The end of my written testimony includes some historical numbers on this line item. The version before you proposes for this line item to be funded at an amount of \$760,000 each fiscal year. Expenses incurred to host the junior fair activities include the ribbons and trophies presented to the participants, all premiums, including scholarship, etc. These expenses add up. Many of us also had to invest in technology to accommodate live 4-H auctions during the pandemic.

We hope and humbly request this additional state investment to support these important activities in retained. The Junior Fair activities are the premier events 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!

The OFMA also enthusiastically supports the \$4.7 million investment for county and independent agricultural societies in the second fiscal year. Fairs will be able to use these funds to address their own unique needs. These funds could go towards building repairs or maintenance, repaving, upgrading bathroom facilities, increasing space in their barns for the livestock exhibits, etc. It is wonderful that these funds are flexible so fairs can address the needs that are unique to their facilities and events.

While I am here today to speak in support of the investment in our county fairs, I also want to highlight the OFMA's support and pride in the Ohio State Fair and the Ohio Exposition Commission. We hope that you will also approve the funds proposed to be appropriated for the Ohio State Fairgrounds renovation and modernization, as well as support keeping those fairgrounds at their current location in Columbus.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, the OFMA appreciates your consideration and hope the investment in our county and independent agricultural societies will be retained. I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.

**Supplemental Funding Data and History:**

The average amount spent by County Agricultural Societies each year based on a 5- year history is \$ 1,268,643

Estimated spend statewide:

2021 Jr. Fair Premiums – \$ 1,242,314.59

2020 Jr. Fair Premiums – \$ 1,637,574.00

2019 Jr. Fair Premiums – \$ 1,128,000.00

2018 Jr. Fair Premiums – \$ 1,128,863.21

2017 Jr. Fair Premiums – \$ 1,206,463.29

State Appropriation

House Bill 64 (FY 2016 and 2017) GRF 700501 County Agricultural Societies \$ 391,415

House Bill 49 (FY 2018 and 2019) GRF 700501 County Agricultural Societies \$ 379,673

House Bill 166 (FY 2020 and 2021) GRF 700501 County Agricultural Societies \$ 379,673

House Bill 110 (FY 2022 and 2023) GRF 700501 County Agricultural Societies \$ 379,673