



Interested Party Testimony
Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Amended Sub Bill 33- State Operating Budget
May 10, 2023

Chair Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee — Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Amended Sub Bill 33, the State Operating Budget, in support of the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association’s funding request which would appropriate \$250,000 in each fiscal year through the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s Soil and Water Conservation District Support line to administer a Soil Health Pilot Project.

My name is David Brandt. I farm and operate Brandt Family Farm and Walnut Creek Seeds with my family in Fairfield County. I am a member of the Ohio Soil Health Initiative and co-founder of the Soil Health Academy. I spoke at COP21 in Paris, in 2015 about the importance of soil health and carbon sequestration. Our farm received a nonpoint source award from the EPA and is recognized as NRCS soil health education site to train national NRCS employees yearly.

I have been no-tilling and using cover crops since 1971 which has reduced our soil erosion down to 100lbs/acre or less. We currently farm 1000 acres of corn, soybeans, and small grains. We keep the soil covered year-round which helps bring and hold nutrients that we don’t need to buy.

We have Field Days every year to educate farmers on no-till and cover crops. Over the years, we have worked with Ohio State University to do on-farm research. Currently we have water quality monitoring stations on the farm and have two years of data to show reduced nitrogen and phosphorus losses.

Through developing good soil health, we have reduced our fertilizer and chemical costs by 70% and eliminated our use of fungicides and insecticide applications. We have increased the proteins in our grains through the use of no-till and cover crops.

Advancing education of good soil health practices is essential, not only to save soils and the future health of our farms, but to avoid tragedies like the May 2 dust storm that cost 6 lives in Illinois.

This pilot project will not just serve the state in mitigating water quality issues but also seeks to improve the viability and profitability of farmers.

I respectfully ask you to support our amendment of \$250,000 in each fiscal year from the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Soil and Water Conservation District Support line to support the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association for the Soil Health Pilot Project.

I can take any questions you may have at this time.

Thank you.

David Brandt
Operator
Brandt Family Farm/Fairfield County