



*Working together for Ohio farmers to advance
agriculture and strengthen our communities.*

**Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
HCR 14 Proponent Testimony
Whittney Bowers, Director of State Policy and Grassroots Engagement**

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, my name is Whittney Bowers and I am the Director of State Policy and Grassroots Engagement at Ohio Farm Bureau. I appreciate the opportunity to offer proponent testimony for House Concurrent Resolution 14 on behalf of Ohio Farm Bureau and our members. This resolution urges Congress to support the reauthorization of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which is an important component of the work being done in Ohio.

Currently in Ohio, GLRI has funded projects for developing agricultural best management practices, stream restoration, coastal wetlands, management of invasive species, and clean-up of contaminated sediments in Ohio.

One of those projects is the Blanchard River Demonstration Farms Network (BRDFN), which is a joint partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. The Demonstration Farms showcase and demonstrate conservation practices that improve agriculture's impact on downstream water quality in Ohio.

The farms currently enrolled in the Demonstration Farm Projects are featured on the project website, <https://blancharddemofarms.org/farms/>, and I would encourage everyone to take a few minutes and learn about not only the conservation practices being used on those farms but also the families behind this progress. Hopefully, some of you have even had the opportunity to visit one of these sites as part of the regular demonstrations offered. With the help of these demonstration farm sites, we can study and showcase the impact of current and new on-farm conservation practices regarding water quality and nutrient management.

Ohio farm families rely on the land, striving to take care of the soil for future generations sustainably. They're also helping to protect the water quality of our streams, rivers, and lakes. Research conducted on these sites and the data that is collected help other farmers implement their own best management practices.

The Demo Farms have been a hub for scientific, reliable, and first-hand information about voluntary conservation measures available to farmers and landowners. These sites have created opportunities for our industry partners to test their research, provide technical



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assistance, and develop program implementation to share industry-wide. The goal is to show how clean water and productive agriculture can coexist through on-farm tours, producer field days, and off-farm presentations. The funding provided by GLRI is an essential piece of the puzzle when working to make sure Ohio continues to be a leader in water management.

We are grateful for the opportunities provided to Ohioans through the GLRI program, and applaud our state policy leaders and our agricultural leaders as they continue to prioritize one of our most valuable resources. Ohio Farm Bureau is committed to partnering with and sharing the results of those working to protect water in Ohio.

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for your consideration of this resolution, and I would be happy to take any questions at this time.