

Testimony Regarding House Bill 33
Jim Chakeres, Executive Vice President
The Ohio Poultry Association
Senate Finance Committee
May 18, 2023

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the committee, my name is Jim Chakeres and I serve as the Executive Vice President of the Ohio Poultry Association (OPA). I am submitting written testimony today on behalf of Ohio's egg, chicken, and turkey farmers regarding two very important budget issues for our members: namely, asking this committee and the Senate for a very modest additional investment in food safety as well as in support of the House language contained in HB 33 that would create a new, world class multispecies animal learning center at the Ohio State University

The Ohio Poultry Association is a non-profit, statewide trade organization that represents more than 600 Ohio egg, chicken, and turkey farmers in communities throughout Ohio. Ohio's egg, chicken and turkey farms directly create nearly 16,000 jobs and generate an additional 61,062 jobs in supplier and ancillary industries. Ohio egg, chicken and turkey production contributes more than \$20.7 billion to the state's economy.

Our member farmers have always been, and remain firmly committed to providing safe, affordable, high-quality food not only for Ohioans but consumers around the world. OPA is very proud of the fact that through the years, our members and our organization have viewed our mission as a "partnership" with the Ohio General Assembly in such important areas as food safety and environmental responsibility. For those very reasons, we are requesting Senate consideration of adding \$314,000 per fiscal year (\$628,000 total) to the Poultry Inspection Line Item within the Department of Agriculture's biennial budget.

As many of you are aware, Ohio and other states have seen a large escalation of avian influenza in the flocks of our members the past few years and our association is asking the State of Ohio and ODA to continue our long-standing partnership to further enable our laboratory partners to meet the ever-growing needs of testing Ohio's poultry and eggs to ensure food and bird safety for your constituents. Avian influenza outbreaks have severely harmed our industry, as when AI infiltrates a flock of our birds, we simply cannot liquidate the diseased birds but, for the safety of our food and your constituents and all Ohioans, we must unfortunately eliminate the entire flock.

The Poultry Inspection Line Item within ODA provides funding for poultry laboratory testing, sample collection and veterinary inspection of live birds transported into the state. This is crucial to not only our industry but all Ohioans because these inspections are vital in helping to prevent and potentially combat avian influenza. In addition, this line item also supports the Ohio Egg Quality Assurance Program, whose focus is to control the very real threat of salmonella. As you can see, this line item plays a very important role to all Ohioans in taking proactive testing and inspection measures to assure that safe, high-quality food can continue to get to your constituents.

I am also asking for support of this committee and of the entire Ohio Senate for the \$10 million allocated in the current version of HB 33 for The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) new world-class Multispecies Animal Learning Center (MALC). OPA and

our members have a long-standing history of working together with The Ohio State University in supporting the overall agriculture industry on numerous issues that come before the Ohio General Assembly. This new Multispecies Animal Learning Center will provide numerous benefits not only to our industry but all Ohioans through activities to promote research involving animal welfare and food production.

This new important facility will have numerous benefits to our state. Namely, this center will allow Ohio to recruit and retain world-class talent to Ohio's agriculture industry, expand our state's ability to continue to be partners with other leading industries in animal agriculture including in the fields of genetics and manure management/disease mitigation, create a state-of-the-art teaching and extension facility for both students and food producers and allow CFAES to educate the general public on agriculture and the importance of agriculture being the #1 industry in Ohio. OPA strongly believes the \$10 million investment allocated for this new facility will create a very positive return-on-investment for Ohio and we strongly encourage this committee and the Senate to retain funding for this new facility in its final version of the budget bill.

On behalf of OPA and our members, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of a small increase in the ODA Poultry Inspection Line item as well as the retention of the \$10 million allocated for the new Multispecies Animal learning Center at the Ohio State University. Please feel free to contact me directly or our Legislative Consultants, Dan Leite, Rob Eshenbaugh, and Courtney Saunders of Capitol Advocates if you should have any questions.