



**Ohio Senate Finance Committee
House Bill 33 – Interested Party Written Only Testimony
Thursday, May 18, 2023**

Chair Dolan and distinguished members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on House Bill 33, which includes several items relating to agriculture.

For background, the Ohio Soybean Association (OSA) is a member-driven, grassroots organization dedicated to improving the business climate for Ohio soybean farmers by providing leadership and advocating for sound policy at the state and national levels. As the fifth-largest soybean producing state, soybeans are an important part of Ohio's economy. Soybeans are Ohio's largest crop by acreage and largest export crop. The industry employs more than 30,000 people and generates more than \$5.3 billion in economic activity annually.

We would like to express our support of the following:

Ohio Department of Agriculture

As part of OSA's policy priorities, we support funding the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) at the level it needs to fulfill their required duties. We support the following:

- Funding for Soil & Water Conservation Districts, watershed planning, conservation, and technical support.
- Funding to support inspection services for meat, dairy, and poultry.
- Funding to support animal health programs that will help the response for disease outbreak including laboratory test supplies, tools, inspectors, and lab positions.
- Funding to support plant health programs that monitor grain elevators and prevent the introduction of invasive plant species.

House Bill 33 as passed by the Ohio House of Representatives included reductions to farmland preservation and the Soil & Water Division. We support restoring this fund to the level proposed by the Governor.

We are also supportive of changes included in the substitute HB 33 to the Agricultural Commodity Depositors Fund. Section 926.18 has not been updated in over thirty years and we believe the proposed changes will benefit farmers that have been caught up in elevator failure and are penalized for doing business under normal course.

H2Ohio Program

In addition to the ODA funding priorities listed above, we also strongly support the increased funding to the H2Ohio program. The past funding to H2Ohio from the General Assembly has supported the beginning of a long-term process to reduce phosphorus runoff from farms using proven, science-based nutrient management best practices. The increased funding proposed in HB33 will allow for the

continuation of H2Ohio in the Western Lake Erie Basin, including best management practices and incentives, and staff support. It will also help grow the program to the rest of the state, expanding these practices to 500,000 more acres in 50 counties and provide the necessary staff to do so.

Also included in the pending substitute HB 33 was \$2 million earmarked for a water quality pilot program focused on legacy phosphorus fields. While we certainly share that this should be explored, we would prefer that funding for the pilot program not be taken from H2Ohio funds. At this time, the resources going toward H2Ohio are already limited and we would prefer the focus remain on the current H2Ohio priorities and program expansion to additional counties.

Ohio Expo Commission and State Fair

We strongly support the \$95 million for each fiscal year for EXPO 2050 as outlined in the introduced version of House Bill 33. We believe in the Expo Center's mission to create awareness of the vast opportunities for Ohioans in the multitude of food and agricultural sectors. The strategic vision, which was developed by the Expo 2050 Task Force's third-party master planning consultant Wellogy, includes a new overall organization of the Ohio Expo Center property, including the renovation, modernization, or demolition of several buildings; the addition of new exhibition facilities, parking garages, and other areas to enhance the guest experience; and improved access between the Ohio Expo Center and the nearby Ohio History Connection. The Ohio State Fair is a great opportunity for agricultural organizations to connect with consumers and we support the updates and investments needed to attract visitors from throughout the state.

The Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

Soybean farmers in Ohio have benefited from the services and research provided by the Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (OSU CFAES), especially the Center for Soybean Research. Ohio soybean farmers invested over a million dollars in 2022 to support projects featuring basic and applied research by OSU Extension and researchers. We support the following relating to OSU CFAES:

- An increased investment in OSU Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research & Development Center (OARDC) is critical to ensure the success of research and extension projects that benefit Ohio's soybean farmers.
- An investment into the Multispecies Animal Learning Center, a multispecies animal livestock learning center planned at the Waterman Farm in Columbus.
- Funding for the Farm Financial Management and Policy Institute

Thank you for your time and consideration of these funding requests. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can provide any more information or answer any questions.



Patrick Knouff
President
Ohio Soybean Association