



Ohio House of Representatives  
Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee House

Chairman Creech, Vice-Chair Newman, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written support of House Bill 65.

Water Quality and Soil Health are the foundation that Soil and Water Conservation Districts are built upon across the State of Ohio. The understanding, awareness, and appreciation of Ohio's soil and water resources is of the utmost importance in every endeavor. While many may think soil health is a uniquely rural concern and stormwater awareness is a uniquely urban concern, this is not the case. Stewardship of our soil and water resources must be the concern of every resident, in every corner of the State.

Currently, we utilize notable designated days and weeks to highlight and support Farmers Day, Agriculture Day, 4-H Week, and FFA Week. These opportunities allow us to engage the public, raise awareness, and educate about the vital role that agriculture and land stewardship play in our daily lives. Similarly, Ohio Stormwater Awareness Week and Ohio Soil Health Week would provide a dedicated platform to emphasize the importance of protecting water quality and improving soil health.

The first week in October is informally recognized as Ohio Stormwater Awareness Week already across the state by SWCDs, the Ohio Stormwater Association, and local governments. This is an opportunity to provide recognition of good practices that protect water quality and reduce stormwater runoff on urban, rural, and agricultural lands. In urban settings, residents can be more disconnected from these natural processes, and bringing more visibility to them is critical. For example, many people don't realize that anything put down a storm drain goes directly into streams.

Soil health is the foundation of Ohio's agricultural economy, which is a critical driver of our state's prosperity. Whether we are talking about farm profitability, water quality, water management, resilience to extreme weather events, or the overall stability of our food system, healthy soils are the key to ensuring sustainable and productive farms for generations to come. By designating a Soil Health Week in Ohio, this legislation would help elevate the importance of soil health education, encourage farmer adoption of these critical practices, and recognize the role of Ohio's agricultural community in addressing environmental and economic challenges.

The passage of HB 65 will provide yet another platform for SWCDs to engage residents and landowners in our urban, suburban, and rural landscapes in understanding their relationship to soil and water quality through wise land management decision-making.

Sincerely,

Kristy Hawthorne  
District Program Administrator