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Ohio House Agriculture Committee
Proponent Testimony on HB 65
Sarah Kuhns, External Affairs Manager, Ohio Association of Foodbanks

Chairman Creech, Vice Chairman Newman, Ranking Member Miller, and distinguished members of the House Agriculture Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB65, the Agriculture Appreciation Act. I want to thank both Representatives Klopfenstein and Peterson for introducing this legislation to show support for Ohio's agricultural industry.

My name is Sarah Kuhns and I work at the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. The association represents Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks and 3,600 partner agencies and programs, such as soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters and supplemental feeding sites across all 88 counties in Ohio. We have been proud to partner closely with Ohio farmers, growers and producers and the State of Ohio through our state-funded food purchase programs, the Ohio Food Program & Agricultural Clearance Program, for nearly three decades to reduce food waste, create and maintain agricultural and food supply jobs and ensure Ohio households have somewhere to turn when they can't afford enough food on their own. These state food programs have allowed us to provide a secondary market for surplus or unmarketable fruits, vegetables, protein and dairy products from Ohio farmers, producers, and manufacturers. And in fact, an independent economic impact analysis found that they created or maintained nearly [300 agricultural jobs in Ohio last year](#).

Ohio's agricultural industry is the backbone of our communities, economies, and food systems. They tirelessly ensure that food makes it to the tables of all Ohioans through this sometimes thankless, often backbreaking work. This type of work does not take breaks, not even on weekends or holidays. It requires sacrifice and discipline. It undoubtedly comes with stress and worry about crop yields, market stability, input costs, and more.

Although this profession comes with its challenges, it is critical to our state and nation to make sure the next generation of farmers and producers is fostered and supported. A reliable, affordable, safe food supply is key for our national security. In addition to the great work Future Farmers of America & 4-H does in our communities, Ohio's foodbank network has also been able to support beginner and mid-sized farmers and producers, which has





allowed them to grow their capacity and take risks, knowing they have a strong foundation and partnership with the food banks to gain exposure to wholesale markets. The farmers and producers we partner with through our food programs often tell us about how they find value and purpose in supporting their local community, in addition to securing their livelihood for themselves and their families.

And as you all know through your own farm experience and through your work on this committee, Ohio farmers are proud to do this work every single day. Celebrating our state’s #1 industry and recognizing the next generation of farmers and producers through key holidays such as “Agriculture Day” and “Farmer’s Day” is a strong step in ensuring that our local food systems and economies remain strong and Ohio farmers and producers feel appreciated. Thank you again to the bill sponsors for introducing the Agriculture Appreciation Act and the committee for hearing this bill. I urge you all to support and pass HB65 out of committee. Chairman Creech and distinguished members of the House Agriculture Committee, thank you all for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions at this time.

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