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Ohio Association
of Agricultural Educators

House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

HB 125 Proponent Testimony

Evan Callicoat, Director of State Policy

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Chairwoman Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and other members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for HB 125. My name is Evan Callicoat, and I serve as the Director of State Policy for Ohio Farm Bureau. The Ohio Farm Bureau has long supported FFA and 4-H as vital programs for agricultural education and workforce development. I am also here representing the Ohio Association of Agricultural Educators, who represent our agricultural educators and FFA advisors. HB 125 will give students in both 4-H and FFA further opportunities to develop essential skills that will allow them to be a vital part of Ohio's number one industry.

FFA and 4-H have long provided students with a wealth of activities and experiences that help them learn life skills and develop essential leadership abilities. One such opportunity, specifically in FFA, is a Supervised Agricultural Experience, or SAE. This is part of the Three-Component Model of Agricultural Education, where the other two components are classroom/lab instruction and engagement in various FFA activities, such as contests and conventions, to name a few. An SAE is experiential learning, either through service or work-based learning. These experiences come in many forms, such as working at a local hardware store, starting a lawn care business, or, like I did, beginning a livestock operation. My SAE involved managing a 100-head beef cattle herd that I owned and operated in partnership with my father. This business not only helped me raise money for my college education but also taught me many essential life skills that prepared me for the workforce, including responsibility, time management, and accountability, just to name a few.

However, an all-too-common problem is that these experiences often require a significant amount of time inside and outside school. Students work diligently to balance these responsibilities, but sometimes events arise during the school day. While some schools allow students to have excused absences for such events, many do not. Consequently, students may miss valuable opportunities to expand their knowledge or engage in business activities, and in unfortunate cases, they may be penalized for missing school. Students should not face penalties for striving to develop themselves as individuals through leadership organizations like FFA/4-H and as future contributors to our workforce.

This bill will permit students to have a limited number of excused absences for 4-H and FFA events, ensuring they are not penalized for attending. This provision does not extend to field trips and other activities that teachers already supervise, yet it offers students additional



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opportunities without removing their teachers from the classroom. We should welcome and celebrate every chance we can give our young people to prepare for the workforce.

I wouldn't be standing in front of you today if it weren't for career tech education, or more specifically, my career tech educators. My FFA advisor was the one who first taught me how to write a speech, how to weld, how to market a product, and how to care for the community I live in. They prepared me not only for my career but also to be a better person in my adult life. This is not an uncommon story that you would hear when asking students who were involved in career tech education.

OFBF and OAAE would like to thank Representatives Creech and Hall for introducing this legislation, which will benefit great organizations like FFA and 4-H, which help prepare our students to be future leaders in Ohio's workforce. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.