

To Whom it May Concern.

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 125, which would ensure that 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) programs in Ohio continue to thrive by giving excused absences for 4-H and FFA events and programs. This bill is crucial for supporting youth development and agriculture education along with the developing of well-rounded and well-spoken, organized professional adults. These adults would create our next work force and from being in these programs would ensure that the characteristics of hard work and determination are maintained in the future.

As a long-time member of the Butler County 4-H, and being extremely involved, I have personally experienced the life-changing benefits of 4-H. 4-H has given me opportunities to speak in front of large crowds without fear, manage a camp cabin without sleep and run a meeting in proper Parliamentary Procedure. Additionally, it has given me opportunities to persevere and show my determination to many different people and programs. Along with being a part of many of Butler County's programs that deal with kids ages 5-18 and giving them these same experiences. The program has taught me valuable skills in leadership, good communication, efficient project management, and it has given a sense of community and belonging that allows me to have an additional circle of close friends and mentors that will be with me for my entire life. These skills are what will lead the next generation of the workforce and the future of America to be great, not only in agricultural settings but as well as for professional and well-spoken adults and their working settings.

The provision of excused absences is particularly important, as it allows more students to participate in 4-H and FFA activities without fear of falling behind in their schoolwork. While schoolwork and education is also important to the development of well-rounded adults some of these programs instill responsibility into these individuals, meaning they are less likely to fall behind on the schoolwork they miss. I have seen firsthand how having this arrangement of excused absences has enabled students to attend important competitions and events that have shaped their futures and given them experiences that have changed them for the better. It also makes it more accessible for youth to attend to these experiences without guilt of missing assignments, or that they might receive negative consequences from missing them.

Overall, 4-H and FFA play a vital role in preparing young people for careers in agriculture. By investing in these programs and making it more accessible for young people to participate and have healthy experiences, we are investing in the future of our food system and our rural communities. Which additionally ensures the future of America and the future workforce of professional and hard-working adults.

I urge you to validate HB 125 and certify that 4-H and FFA programs within Ohio continue to thrive for as long as possible. This bill allows more youth to participate in these beneficial programs that allow them to grow without negatively impacting their education.