

Kara Judd Proponent Testimony

To the Honorable Members of the Ohio House Education Committee,

As an educator and proud alum of both 4-H and FFA, I am writing to express my strong support for HB 125, which proposes to excuse students from school for participation in 4-H and FFA-related community service activities.

Having personally benefited from these organizations during my youth, I know firsthand the impact they have on shaping responsible, capable, and community-minded individuals. The leadership, communication, and hands-on life skills I developed through 4-H and FFA continue to influence my career and character today. I now see those same benefits reflected both in my own three children and the students I teach who are actively involved in these programs.

4-H and FFA provide valuable experiential learning opportunities—many of which are not explicitly taught in our public school systems today. Skills such as public speaking, financial literacy, agricultural education, animal care, and community engagement are critical for real-world success, yet often fall outside the scope of standard curricula. These programs fill that gap and produce well-rounded, career-ready students.

Unfortunately, some of these enriching events and service projects take place during the school day, placing students in the difficult position of choosing between school attendance and meaningful participation. The proposed legislation would formally recognize the educational value of these activities and ensure that students are not penalized for being actively engaged in leadership and service.

As both an educator and former 4-H and FFA member, I urge you to support this bill. Allowing excused absences for approved 4-H and FFA activities not only supports student growth—it affirms our commitment to preparing students for life beyond the classroom.

Thank you for your time and for supporting the development of Ohio's future leaders.