



OHIO SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION

Interested Party Testimony - House Bill 96
Ohio House Finance Committee
Rusty Goebel, Ohio Soybean Association President
April 3, 2025

Chairman Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the House Finance Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to submit interested part testimony on House Bill 96. I am Rusty Goebel, President of the Ohio Soybean Association and a Soybean farmer in Williams County.

On behalf of the Ohio Soybean Association (OSA) and the thousands of soybean farmers across the state, I would like to express our strong support for key agriculture-related funding priorities in House Bill 96, the state operating budget for FY 2026-2027. To ensure Ohio farmers remain competitive and have the resources needed for long-term economic sustainability, we urge support for the following OSA budget priorities:

H2Ohio has expanded from serving an area consisting of 14 counties in Northwest Ohio to a statewide effort. This program continues to see tremendous support from Ohio farmers. Growers have enrolled more than 2.2 million acres into H2Ohio. This program helps improve water quality and OSA encourages continuation of this support. In the current proposal, funding for H2Ohio has been cut by over \$120 million overall. The Department of Agriculture is seeing a 44% cut in H2Ohio funding. It seems unlikely H2Ohio can remain a statewide initiative at these lowered funding levels. We request that funding levels be restored to the as introduced levels.

We also request pesticide application requirements proposed in the first iteration of the bill be reinstated. These changes were proposed to ensure Ohio is in compliance with federal requirements. While we are appreciative of the effort by the House to avoid new regulations, in this instance, the consequences of not meeting federal standards would be more harmful to the agriculture industry.

The as introduced version of the budget includes a 3% funding cut from the current fiscal year levels for agricultural research and develop at the College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at Ohio State. State funding for Ohio's agricultural research is essential to ensuring the long-term success, sustainability, and competitiveness of the state's largest industry. Investments in agricultural research at institutions like The Ohio State University drive innovation in crop yields, soil health, pest management, water quality, and more, helping farmers adapt to evolving challenges. Reducing funding for this program during an already challenging financial time for farmers would significantly impact their operations. OSA requests funding levels be restored to FY 25 funding levels for OSU Agricultural Research and Development.



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Similarly, the OSU Extension Service is taking a 3% funding cut from the current fiscal year. Extension plays a vital role in supporting Ohio's soybean industry by providing research-based education, resources, and technical assistance to farmers across the state. Extension specialists conduct on-farm research trials and share the latest advancements in weed resistance, nutrient management, and conservation practices, ensuring that Ohio's soybean farmers stay competitive in an evolving agricultural landscape. OSA also requests restoration of the Extension Service line item to FY 25 levels.

Finally, OSA is working in partnership with firefighters to help eliminate the use of per— and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) containing Aqueous Film Forming Foams (AFFF). These firefighting foams are a major contributor to PFAS pollution in water and are a health hazard to firefighters. We are proud to report there is a safe and environmentally friendly alternative, made from soybeans, that contains no PFAS and no fluorinated chemicals. The DeWine Administration has taken a key first step by creating the Ohio AFFF Takeback Program. We would encourage your support for creating a program to help fire departments acquire PFAS-free replacement products as a logical next step to solving this problem. This will help protect our firefighters, our communities and support new markets for Ohio farmers.

Agriculture is a pillar of Ohio's economy, and continued legislative support is critical to ensure our industry remains strong and competitive. We appreciate your leadership in advancing policies that benefit Ohio's farmers, rural communities, and agribusinesses.