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May 14, 2025

The Honorable Tim Schaffer, Chairman
The Honorable Kyle Koehler, Vice Chair
The Honorable Paula Hicks-Hudson, Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on H.B. No. 96. We wish to express our significant concerns with the level of funding provided for the agricultural portion of the H2Ohio program under Section 211.10 of the bill. The H2Ohio program has been a significant innovation in voluntary nutrient management efforts and collaborative water quality advancement, promoting beneficial environmental outcomes while simultaneously helping farmers navigate the cost and uncertainty that significant practice changes can bring.

GROWMARK is an agricultural cooperative serving almost 400,000 customers across North America, providing agronomy, energy, facility engineering and construction, and logistics products and services, as well as grain marketing and risk management services. Headquartered in Bloomington, Illinois, GROWMARK owns the FS trademark, which is used by member cooperatives. More information is available at GROWMARK.com.

Headquartered in Findlay, Ohio, Legacy Farmers Cooperative is a locally owned farmer cooperative, with divisions representing agronomy, grain, fuel and petroleum, and a lawn and pet retail store. Legacy Farmers Cooperative serves customers in Allen, Defiance, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Wood, and Wyandot Counties and is a member of the FS System of agricultural cooperatives.

Legacy Farmers Cooperative has been a leader in driving the success of the H2Ohio program, enrolling almost 110,000 acres into the program over the last two years. This rapid growth, however, is at risk if the substantial proposed cuts to the H2Ohio program are carried out.

With the expansion of the H2Ohio program statewide, keeping funding of the program at least consistent with the previous year is vital for ensuring that it is able to meet demand and continue the environmental gains it has made.

Uncertainty around the funding for the program will have an impact on farmers who are making planning decisions for upcoming growing seasons. Many decisions, such as planting cover crops, must be made well in advance as the farmer is considering overall crop rotations, input ordering, and many other management components. Without the certainty of adequate funding being available to support the

program, farmers may be discouraged from participating lest they are left with the full cost of a practice they anticipated receiving cost-share funding for. This is especially important in a time of a challenging farm economy.

We strongly encourage that funding for the agricultural portion of H2Ohio under Section 211.10 of the bill be at least consistent with the as-introduced levels. Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Connor Kaeb', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Connor Kaeb
Associate Manager, Government Relations
GROWMARK, Inc.

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