



OHIO SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION

Public Testimony - House Bill 96
Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Brandon Kern, Deputy Executive Director and Senior Policy Director
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Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony on House Bill 96. 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 budget items:

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.**

The as introduced version of the budget includes a 3% funding cut from the current fiscal year levels for agricultural research and development 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.**

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, we have been in ongoing discussions with the Ohio Department of Agriculture regarding pesticide regulation. New federal rules recently changed requirements to earn a pesticide applicator license. Our organization believes that state-level pesticide regulations should reflect federal requirements but not be more stringent than what is necessary for compliance.

We are concerned that language in the current version of the bill may inadvertently create new costly requirements that aren't needed for federal compliance. Of particular concern, the bill requires restricted use pesticides to be applied exclusively by a licensed applicator. Federal requirements allow for a commercial applicator's trained service person or a private applicator's immediate family or employee to apply those pesticides without a license under the direct supervision of a licensed applicator. **We would support an amendment to HB 96 that limits pesticide regulations to only those required under federal law.**

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.