

## **Testimony in Support of the Agriculture Education Fifth Quarter Grant Presented to Members of the Ohio State Senate**

Honorable Members of the Senate,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Agriculture Education Fifth Quarter Grant. As an agricultural educator, I see daily the value that work-based learning provides for our students through supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs), Career Development Events (CDEs), FFA programs, and countless community service efforts. The Fifth Quarter Grant is a vital, state-funded program that ensures these opportunities are accessible year-round—not just during the traditional school day or academic year. It provides critical funding to schools and career centers to support extended instruction that takes place after hours, on weekends, and throughout the summer. This extended learning is essential for the development of job-ready skills, leadership capacity, and a strong connection to Ohio's agricultural economy.

Today, Ohio serves more than 29,000 FFA members in 332 schools, with over 10,000 students participating in at least one Career Development Event each year. I personally serve well over 100 students each year, with over half of those students involved in Career Development Events and a majority keeping records of their Supervised Agricultural Experiences. These students are gaining real-world experience, earning income, and contributing to their communities—often with the direct, after-hours support of their teachers. Yet the average stipend provided by the Fifth Quarter Grant is only \$2,500 annually per educator. This amount has not increased in over a decade, despite the growing demands on teachers' time and the rising costs of transportation, materials, and program delivery. Many educators work full-time schedules throughout the summer, guiding students through SAEs, attending FFA Camp, and chaperoning leadership events—all without compensation beyond this modest stipend.

In recognition of the vital role agricultural education plays in workforce development, I respectfully urge the Ohio Senate to support an increase in the Fifth Quarter Grant funding from \$1.2 million to \$2.4 million in the FY26–27 Operating Budget (HB 96). This funding is not just an investment in teachers—it is an investment in Ohio's students, rural communities, and agricultural industry. With FFA members nationwide earning nearly \$4 billion annually through their SAE projects, it's clear that the skills and experiences provided through agricultural education programs are yielding real economic value. Increased funding will ensure educators have the resources and time they need to continue offering the high-quality, real-world learning that prepares Ohio's next generation for successful careers in agriculture.