

To the esteemed members of the Ohio Senate,

My name is Whitney Burns, and I am a proud junior within the Covington Agriculture Education Program at Covington High School, a satellite program of Upper Valley Career Center. I testify to you today about the profound value that extended programming within my agriculture education has had on my life and, I believe, on the future of our state.

My involvement in agricultural education has extended far beyond the traditional classroom setting. For nearly 500 hours, I have volunteered as a program assistant within our department's supervised agriculture experience (SAE) program. This wasn't simply about fulfilling a requirement; it was an immersive opportunity that has shaped me in ways I could never have imagined. In this role, I've had the privilege of assisting my teachers in bringing lesson plans to life for my fellow students. I've spent countless hours working directly with younger FFA members, guiding them, answering their questions, and fostering their passion for agriculture. These experiences have not only solidified my own understanding of agricultural principles but have also ignited within me a deep appreciation for the art of teaching.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my extended involvement has been working with the Novice Parliamentary Procedure team. This year, I had the honor of guiding eight freshmen through the intricacies of parliamentary law. Witnessing their growth, their dedication, and ultimately, their success in reaching the state FFA contest for the very first time was an incredibly fulfilling experience. It underscored the power of mentorship and the importance of providing students with opportunities to develop essential leadership and communication skills. However, the most significant impact of my extended programming and SAE has been the clarity it has brought to my future. Through these hands-on experiences, through the challenges and the triumphs of working with others and taking on leadership roles, I have discovered a deep passion for education. I now aspire to dedicate my career to becoming a teacher, and I can say with certainty that my time within this extended agriculture education program has been the catalyst for this profound realization.

We all know the critical need for dedicated and skilled educators in Ohio. My experience is a testament to how robust, extended programming within

agriculture education can cultivate not only knowledgeable agriculturalists but also passionate future teachers. By investing in and supporting these expanded opportunities, you are not only enriching the lives of students like me but also directly addressing the need for quality educators within our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to recognize the invaluable impact of extended programming in agriculture education and to continue supporting initiatives that empower students and cultivate the next generation of Ohio's leaders and educators.