



*Working together for Ohio farmers to advance
agriculture and strengthen our communities.*

**Senate Education Committee
HB 96 Interested Party Testimony
Evan Callicoat, Director of State Policy
May 14th, 2025**

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and other honorable members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on HB 96, the FY26- 27 Operating Budget. My comments today will focus on two provisions that OFBF believes are critical for preparing the next generation of our workforce and creating more opportunities for agricultural education to impact Ohio students.

First, I would like to discuss the Agricultural 5th Quarter Fund. This fund allows school districts to apply to DEW for grants each year to help fund stipends for agricultural educators who often spend considerable time outside of the regular school day and summer with their students. Like any teacher, agricultural educators spend a lot of their time in the classroom with their students, learning about topics such as animal anatomy, public speaking, and welding. However, unlike most teachers, they dedicate a significant amount of time *outside* of the classroom evaluating the SAEs I mentioned above, transporting students to various competitions, and managing all that comes with running not only a classroom but also an FFA chapter. Many agricultural educators will tell you that these activities outside of the normal school day are “just part of the job description”; however, we would argue that they demonstrate their unrivaled dedication and passion for agricultural education, as well as their commitment to helping students reach their full potential. We humbly request the addition of **Amendment SC1194** to enable our stellar ag educators to create more opportunities for Ohio students.

Secondly, I want to emphasize our support for an amendment (**SC0534**) to reinstate \$16.325 million for Career Awareness and Exploration, which was cut from the House budget. This amendment is being sought by Ohio Excels, one of our great partner organizations in advocating for a more robust and accessible career tech education system. This funding supports valuable, community-focused initiatives while providing students with essential connections between their education and future careers. The funds’ flexibility enables communities to customize programs according to their local workforce requirements and student interests. Without this funding, a critical aspect of Ohio’s career-readiness framework is under threat, especially for younger students who gain the most from early exposure. Restoring these funds guarantees that students in rural, urban, and suburban districts can continue to access career exploration opportunities that motivate them to envision their futures. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify on these important provisions of HB 96 and would be happy to answer any questions at this time.