

## Teacher Testimony

Hello, My name is Sophie Hoelscher and I am proud to serve as an agricultural educator and FFA Advisor at New Bremen High School in Auglaize County, where I have the privilege of helping students develop leadership skills, career readiness, and real-world agricultural experiences that prepare them for success well beyond high school.

Agricultural education is unique—it does not stop when the final school bell rings or when summer break begins. The very nature of our profession requires us to serve our students year-round, providing guidance through Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects, Career Development Events (CDEs), community service programs, and leadership conferences. Without extended programming, these opportunities would simply not exist.

In my program alone, I have students learning skills at local dairy farms, starting small livestock operations, and designing advertisements for a local business. These activities do not happen during a traditional 8 AM- 3PM school day. They occur on evenings, weekends, and throughout the summer months—when I am still fully invested in student learning, despite not being compensated without extended contracts.

The 5th Quarter Grant is essential to making this work sustainable. It ensures that ag educators can continue providing hands-on mentorship, industry exposure, and college and career connections outside of the regular school year. The results speak for themselves. My students have gone on to win national FFA awards, launch ag businesses, and pursue degrees in agronomy, animal science, and ag education—all because of the time and attention they were given outside the traditional classroom.

I know firsthand the long hours it takes to help a student build a resume, conduct a research experiment, or prepare for a job interview. I've driven students to fairs, job shadows, and college visits— each moment a powerful investment in their future. But without consistent, reliable support through extended pay, our ability to offer these experiences is limited, and the inequity between districts that support these programs and those that don't only grows.

This bill is about equity. It's about access. And it's about empowering the educators who are going above and beyond to prepare the next generation of farmers, scientists, engineers, and community leaders.

I respectfully ask for your support of the expansion of the 5th Quarter Grant budget to fund extended programming for ALL agricultural educators in Ohio. This investment is not just in our teachers—it is in every student who dreams of a career in agriculture and every community that depends on the success of Ohio's number one industry.

Thank you for your time and your continued support of career-technical education.

## Student Testimony

Hello, my name is Lucy Homan. I am a current Junior at New Bremen Schools, where I stand as our FFA Chapter's current President. My Supervised Agricultural Experience is a Dairy Production Placement Project, where I work on a family farm as a farmhand. Some of my tasks include: feeding and caring for 300 holstein heifers, milking our 350 holstein cows, harvesting our corn, soybeans, wheat, and alfalfa, scraping and bedding pens, and daily herd checks. This bill will directly impact me because without the assistance from my ag teacher to help me grow through my Supervised Agricultural Experience, there would be many real-life hands-on skills that I may have never learned.

Because of my SAE project, I have had the opportunity to grow and apply for a proficiency award through Ohio FFA. These awards recognize the hard work of FFA Members who grow and learn through their Supervised Agricultural Experience. This year, I was named as a Top 4 Finalist in the Dairy Production Placement area. With being a Top 4 State finalist in my SAE project, I needed a lot of help from my ag teacher to assist with the application process and also interviewing process. With the 5th Quarter Grant, my Ag teacher was able to help me properly prepare for my interview. I would not have been able to place as well as I did as only a Junior in High School, without her help outside of school. As I am still fully involved in my SAE project throughout the entire year, I would like to be able to apply again. Additional funding through the 5th Quarter Grant will help properly compensate my Ag Teacher's time spent on helping me build my skills, supervise my project, write my application, and prepare me for interviews. She helps me with or without being compensated, but the additional funding would help her greatly. Without additional funding, I also would not have been able to go to the State Convention where I was recognized for my Top 4 placing. In the future, I would like to have the opportunity to travel to the National FFA Convention. If I am able to apply again and have the chance of winning, the 5th Quarter Grant helps with that.

Other opportunities I am able to do because of my Ag Teacher's 5th Quarter Grant pay are CDEs (Career Development Events). Participating in the Dairy Judging CDE, I am able to learn more about the cattle skeletal system to learn more about different parts of the cow and to know what are desirable traits of a dairy cow. My Ag teacher spends time outside of school and on the weekend to help me compete and grow in this area. These skills directly apply to my SAE Project and to what I want to do when I graduate.

Our FFA chapter also participates in many outside-of-school activities, such as our FFA meetings that we do monthly. At our meetings, we give our members the opportunity to get a chance to vote on the things we do and update them on events that are going on. With this, they learn how to properly run a business meeting. We also always have an activity that we can learn from such as, team building exercises and business tours. Without the assistance of our Ag teacher, us officers would not be able to put on any of these activities for all the FFA Members in New Bremen.

This bill would help to support our students' Supervised Agricultural Experience projects to help us develop real-life skills, a work ethic, and foster responsibility. I encourage you to vote for this bill to help give more students the opportunity they deserve! Thank you.