



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE OHIO SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

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Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for inviting me to provide testimony today regarding the state's biennial operating budget. My name is Rustin Moore, and I am proud to serve as Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at The Ohio State University.

Let me begin by saying that we are very appreciative of your ongoing support for the Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine (OSUVMC) and your commitment to help address the state's veterinary shortage. We are also grateful to the Governor DeWine and the House of Representatives for their investment in the Protect OHIO initiative that is aimed at educating more Ohio veterinarians and addressing this shortage across the state.

As the Dean of the only veterinary medicine college in Ohio, I would like to share with you the many challenges and risks facing animals, people and agriculture in our great state of Ohio, and it is my privilege to inform you how Ohio's only college of veterinary medicine can address those challenges. Through my testimony and responding to your questions, I hope to gain and solidify your trust and support of our efforts to truly impact and protect Ohio's animals, people and agriculture.

The Executive Budget appropriated \$20 million each year to the OSU College of Veterinary Medicine's line item to support the Protect OHIO initiative that will benefit the agriculture industry and public health across the state. The House Budget reduced that funding to \$15 million, while the current Senate substitute version before you today further reduced the appropriation level to \$7.5 million in FY 26 and FY 27.

While we certainly understand that with every budget comes difficult decisions, **I would respectfully request the Senate's support to restore funding for our line item to \$15 million per year.** I understand this is a significant increase from our current funding levels so let me briefly explain why we believe this funding is so critical for the State. While we consistently rank as one the top 5 overall veterinary colleges in the country. OSUVMC received the lowest state funding compared to top-ranked peer colleges with an annual support of \$23,600 per student as opposed the national average of \$44,200 per student.

Without additional state support, it will be nearly impossible to meet the growing demand for veterinarians, particularly in rural areas where shortages are most severe. In addition, the college

cannot adequately protect Ohio's agricultural industry against potential severe disease threats such as highly pathogenic avian influenza, African swine fever and other infectious diseases.

The proposed investment will address these issues with a new initiative that is anchored around growing our class size with Ohio students. This approach will strengthen Ohio's veterinary workforce, protect public health, and advance the agricultural economy through three interdependent pillars:

**Increase the Number of Veterinarians to Serve Rural and Large Animal Needs**

- Increase our total class size to 200 students from 165 students per year, with a commitment that all 35 additional students will be from Ohio, with an emphasis on attracting students from rural, underserved areas
- Enhance academic, mentoring and support programs by increasing the number of world-class faculty.
- Expand large animal hands-on training and rural community immersion opportunities.

**Provide Support to increase Number of Rural Veterinarians**

- Promote financial incentives and scholarships to veterinarians serving rural and under-served communities to increase success.
- Collaborate with communities to build a pipeline by creating incentive programs and partnering with schools and programs like 4-H and FFA.

**Expanding Research to Monitor Emerging Infectious Disease Through Ohio**

- Expand proactive research on top-priority diseases for animal agriculture in Ohio.
- Work with Ohio producers to support best practices that reduce disease transmission risks through early detection.

Ohio's \$125 billion agriculture industry depends on a strong veterinary workforce. Over 80% of veterinarians serving Ohio were trained at The Ohio State University. Yet the demand for veterinary services far outpaces supply—by 2030, Ohio is projected to face a shortage of up to 1,000 veterinarians. Today, 28 Ohio counties are already federally designated as underserved, especially in rural areas. Without action, this shortage threatens food security, public health, and disease prevention efforts statewide.

The Protect OHIO initiative is our proactive solution. With your support, we will train more veterinarians with a focus on recruiting from rural and underserved communities, where students are most likely to return and practice.

Once again, thank you for your support of this important initiative and for your consideration of our request to restore funding to the House Budget levels. We believe this is a smart, strategic investment of taxpayer dollars that will better protect the critical agricultural industry across the Buckeye State.

I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.