



Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 120

Youth Urban Agriculture Program

Submitted by:

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Introduction and Background

Chair, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 120, the Youth Urban Agriculture Program sponsored by Senator Paula Hicks-Hudson.

We are Cheryl Wheeler and Christa Wheeler, Co-Founders of Efinity Harvest Farm, an urban agriculture farm based in Trotwood, Ohio. Our work is rooted in a multi-generational agricultural legacy and shaped by direct experience working with youth, families, and communities facing food insecurity and limited access to opportunity. Through Efinity Harvest Farm, we advance practical, community-based solutions that connect food production, education, and workforce development.

Overview of Efinity Harvest Farm

Efinity Harvest Farm is an urban agriculture operation dedicated to growing and distributing fresh, locally sourced produce while strengthening food access and community resilience. Our **from seed to table** approach integrates farming, education, and engagement to support healthy living across generations.

We grow vegetables, fruits, and herbs, sell directly to the community through outlets such as the 2nd Street Market in Dayton and the Trotwood Community Market, with bulk and wholesale options that expand access to nutritious food and reinforce local food systems.

Beyond production, Efinity Harvest Farm functions as a community learning environment. Under the leadership of Cheryl Wheeler and Christa Wheeler, our work includes youth education and workforce exposure supported through multiple funding sources, research and development focused on urban soil health, climate-resilient, and regenerative farming practices, and community engagement through farm tours, workshops, conferences, and volunteer partnerships.

Our mission is to **promote food resilience for future generations** by fostering sustainable agriculture, empowering communities, and ensuring access to fresh, locally grown produce.

Urban Youth Farmer Initiative Program Impact

The Urban Youth Farmer Initiative Program is a central expression of Efinity Harvest Farm's mission. Our program serves youth ages 11–18 through structured, hands-on experiences that connect agriculture to leadership, responsibility, and real-world learning.

Youth participate in planting and harvesting, food safety practices, **cooking and nutrition education**, produce preparation, market activities, and community engagement. The program builds transferable skills, teamwork, communication, accountability, and problem-solving while exposing participants to **career pathways** in agriculture, environmental science, nutrition, culinary, food systems, and sustainability.

As part of this learning, youth have also participated in value-added production and **entrepreneurship** activities, including assisting with the preparation, packaging, and sale of farm-based products such as salsa at farmers markets. These experiences introduce youth to basic business concepts including product development, food handling standards, pricing, and customer engagement, while reinforcing the connection between agriculture, entrepreneurship, and local economic opportunity.

An extension of this work is our **Green Teen Conference**, an annual youth-focused convening that brings together youth, educators, farmers, and environmental professionals for immersive learning centered on agriculture, wellness, leadership, and environmental stewardship.

As a result of their participation, several youth serve on **Efinity Harvest Farm's Youth Advisory Board**, providing input on program design and outreach and ensuring programming remains youth-informed and responsive. Many participants leave the program with increased confidence, deepened engagement, and a stronger sense of responsibility to their community.

Community and Statewide Value

The impact of Efinity Harvest Farm's youth programming extends beyond individual participants. Our work strengthens local food systems, supports public health awareness, and helps develop engaged young leaders prepared to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Urban agriculture programs address multiple public priorities simultaneously including food access, youth workforce development, environmental education, and community resilience. With sustained support, programs like Efinity Harvest Farm can serve as **replicable models** across Ohio communities.

Support for Senate Bill 120

Senate Bill 120 represents a thoughtful investment in Ohio's youth and the community-based organizations that support them. Continued funding will allow farms like Efinity Harvest Farm to strengthen program consistency, deepen impact, and responsibly expand reach.

Efinity Harvest Farm operates with clear program structure, documented youth engagement processes, and established partnerships that support responsible fund use, outcome tracking, and alignment with state reporting requirements.

On behalf of Efinity Harvest Farm, and the youth, families, and communities we serve, we respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill 120.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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