

Senators,

Thank you for allowing us the time to speak in front of your committee today to advocate for the repurposing of the estimated 600 acre land plot northeast of the city of Marion that was previously used by the Marion Correctional Institute. Our goal is to see the land repurposed for The Ohio State University at the Marion regional campus to provide a more affordable and accessible Agriculture Program to high school students interested in the field of agriculture. Ohio State University President, Dr. Michael V. Drake, Regional Campus Dean and Director Dr. Greg Rose, and others have been invited into the conversation..

In the long term, repurposing this land for use at the OSU regional campus at Marion would generate revenue beyond the value of the land itself because of the ability to grow crops and raise livestock on an annual basis. The revenue generated would come directly from the hands on experience of collegiate and high school students working in the field of agriculture.

Agriculture Education is not an area of study where students sit down in the classroom and are drilled with information and facts about agriculture all day. Experience out in the field and hands on learning is what makes Agriculture Education an effective and beneficial area of study for the student. As a four year FFA member, I can testify to the advantages of hands on learning and experience that agriculture can provide to make the educational experience enjoyable and well worth the student's time. I am blessed to have been part of an FFA program founded by someone who cares about education and success of her students. I have seen great success throughout my FFA career and have learned practices that benefit my personal agricultural enterprise at home.

The prison land could be used to provide the opportunity for agriculture education to students around the area at high school and collegiate levels. I can accurately say that there are around 3,000 students within thirty miles of the Marion Campus enrolled in high school FFA programs, many of which are interested in seeking a degree in agriculture. Also for many students, traveling to Ohio State's Agricultural Technical Institute(ATI) or the Columbus Campus is not an option because of financial situations or inability to leave the family farm. Other students might not seek a degree in agriculture because of being uninformed about the opportunities in the agricultural field. I have seen students, even in rural areas, think of agriculture simply as farming; however they do not witness the engineering, science, communication and multiple other sides of agriculture that could be explored. Opening this land up for educational purposes will allow high school and collegiate students the opportunity to discover and explore their passions in the field of agriculture.

Senators, Thank you again for your time and I strongly encourage you to remove this land from the budget so that this land could be used for Agricultural Education for years to come.

Sincerely,

Derek Goodman