

Testimony submitted by Dr. Henry and Mrs. Eloise Nixt, Marion County.

Adam Smith, the father of modern economics, believed that the best economic benefit for all can usually be accomplished when individuals act in their own self-interest.

Today we stand before you aware that you are deliberating the budget for the State of Ohio. There are many worthy considerations of how the State will use taxes collected or the resources available to balance the budget. One asset being considered is farmland associated with various prisons around Our State.

We are sure there are unique stories for each prison farmland situation. However, we reside in Marion County where Marion Correctional Institute lies. It is our understanding that the sale by competitive bid of at least 575 acres of farmland lying in the MCI prison grounds has been added to HB 49 now before your attention.

Would you please consider an alternative use for this land? We would like to see the land transferred from the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction to Higher Education. We see the land having potential for increasing agriculture education opportunities for students throughout a several-county area served by the Marion regional campus of Ohio State University as well as serving rural and urban high schools throughout our area. This acreage would make a phenomenal learning laboratory, ag industry jobs training center, and research facility.

When we heard in mid-May of the intended sell of the land through the Budget Bill, we were challenged to contact persons in agriculture business, marketing, finance, education, and government and community leaders along with high school students who share our passion for the future of agriculture in Our State. You will receive written testimony from some as well as oral testimony from others including a spokesperson representing the descendants of farm family owners prior to World War II.

We are well aware the land could be purchased by someone engaged in farming. However, we ask that the Senate Budget Committee recommend that the sale of this farmland be removed from the current budget. Instead, we endorse a study with agriculture industry leaders, educators, government officials, and citizens to discuss opportunities that could be initiated to enhance the economic and workforce development of our communities through this farmland asset now before you. We believe that moving this property into higher education will fulfill the spirit of the land-grant system providing educational access and affordability for students.

Agriculture is the number one industry in world, and Ohio is a leader in food production. Please consider what would provide the best economic benefit for our young people before this asset is gone forever...serving self-interest or the opportunity for this land to serve young agriculturists for generations to come.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and for your timely consideration.

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