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Dear Senate Budget Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I would ask you to, pause and consider the opportunity you have before you. If you had the opportunity to increase the hands on knowledge, technical skillsets, and Precision technology of young people preparing to engage in Ohio's number one Industry, Agriculture, would you? I know the Agriculture Industry has had great support from the State of Ohio, as it brings \$105 billion to Ohio's economy, annually. I trust that you will see the potential to engage thousands of young people with S.T.E.M. lessons by choosing to set aside the land owned by the Ohio Department of Corrections and transfer it to The Ohio State University, Ohio's Land Grant College. What an amazing opportunity we have, as a State, to help our economy grow, as we utilize the Prison Farm Land in Marion, Ohio to provide students with hands on knowledge in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math.

Agriculture has been a foundation of our Country since it was founded. In fact, Benjamin Franklin said, "There seem to be but three ways for a nation to acquire wealth... The third by agriculture, the only honest way, wherein man receives a real increase of the seed thrown into the ground, in a kind of continual miracle, wrought by the hand of God in his favor, as a reward for his innocent life and his virtuous industry." (*Positions to be Examined, Concerning National Wealth*, 1769) Thomas Jefferson said, "I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as they are chiefly agricultural." (Letter to James Madison, 1787) The wonderful thing about Agriculture is that it continues to lay a strong foundation for our communities. Especially in Northwest Ohio, where 1 out of every 7 jobs is related to Agriculture.

From livestock farmers and grain farmers to ethanol producers and food processing facilities Agriculture is growing and needs many hands to accomplish the many tasks involved in the precise work of Agriculture. Now, more than ever, there are a multitude of specialty positions within our Industry that require hands on education. From Mechanics to Soil Scientists and Food Scientists to Drone Pilots and other Specialists Agriculture employs a variety of technical skillsets. As a farm owner, maple syrup producer, Ag teacher, and local Farm Bureau President I have seen many aspects



of our great Industry. I also know many great farmers who would love to buy the land. However, as I reflect on my time as an FFA member and Ag Education/Ag Production student at the Ohio State University I most vividly reflect on the times spent in labs. I recently heard an Ag student talk about their “Hands on, Minds On” tinkering department. I truly believe the learning happens when students have access to be engaged in the real work of the farm and Ag. Industry. The lessons I recall most are the opportunities to learn directly on the farm or in the lab, whether I was preparing animals for showing, visiting livestock farms at Ohio State, in the Animal Nutrition lab figuring feed quality, in the greenhouse planting crops, or in the Ag Construction Systems Management Department Surveying land, these are the lessons that I truly learned from. As they say experience is the best teacher.

We recently planted 4,000 trees on our farm and I saw it was a culmination of many things I taught during the 5 years I was an Ag. Educator. During the experience of applying for grants, securing materials, running equipment, planting trees and preparing them for survival I was blessed to truly understand all of the bits and pieces I had gathered from 8 years as a student and 5 years as a teacher. Experience is what truly allowed me to understand the concepts of Water Quality, Soil type differences, and Ag Business Skillsets. Such a multi-faceted project allows for many opportunities to learn. As an Ag Educator, I spent time creating land labs where students could apply the book knowledge taught within the classroom, so that knowledge could be taken out of the classroom and brought to life. I believe the same thing can happen to thousands of students, if the prison land is allowed to be used for higher education purposes. Experiential learning on the farm, working with my peers, raising livestock, hay, and maple syrup has taught me things I did not learn within the classroom. Once a student is done with higher education the most important part of their resume, is typically not where they went to school, but instead where they went to work while they were in school. What experiences do they have that will allow them to be an asset to the Agriculture Industry. The prison ground, if left in the hands of higher education and properly managed, as a learning lab, will provide students with the hands on skills they need to help our Industry and Great State of Ohio Thrive.

I know great hard working farm families that could grow in their technical skills if their students headed off to college. Sadly, these students are needed on the farm, so they cannot afford to travel far away to college. In fact, I know a family with 2 college aged students that raise 40,000 pigs each year. That equates to twenty-three million and forty thousand three oz. servings of Pork. Take a moment to guess how many people work on their farm. 6 people are providing millions of servings of Pork. It is truly important that they are highly technical and educated about how to do their job properly. These boys have worked hard on the farm all of their lives and their parents value higher education. As a teacher I can see these two would learn the best in a hands on, minds on, environment. This is true of many people that are ideal candidates to work within the Agriculture



Industry. In order to be productive they need to be highly technical problem solvers, and experience is what develops these skills.

Please see that the opportunity to use this prison ground as a working farm learning lab for many students' hands to learn and grow for generations to come will ultimately have a larger positive impact on our state, than the impact of selling it to one farmer and making one deposit into State funds. Keeping this land in the hands of a local regional campus of our land grant university will provide educational opportunities to many more within our rural communities that cannot afford to leave the farm for higher education, due to traveling and time constraints. The goal of land grant universities is to provide education, research, and extension. Please help our local communities grow through the transfer of this land from the Ohio Corrections to The Ohio State University for the purpose of higher education.

Warm regards,
Shelby Brammell

