



Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee, Sub. Bill 250 Opponent Testimony, November 14th, 2018

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Chairman Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan and Ranking member Thomas, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 250. As an organization that works with individuals responsible for providing the food and fiber required on which we all depend, the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association understands issues of national security and the need to protect the core functioning of society. Unfortunately, this legislation is more concerned with silencing dissent rather than protecting our state and national security.

The fact that organizations are singled out for fines that are ten times the maximum faced by an individual combined with the codification of vague terms such as "...impede the facility's operation or construction" and "...knowingly enter or remain" call into question the motives for legislation that is being shopped around the country by a special interest organization.

We must ensure that we protect the First Amendment right of our citizens to express their views in a manner that is non-violent and effective. Measures such as SB 250 threaten the ability of individuals and organizations to express their views without fear of extreme penalty; this proposed legislation is not in keeping with this basic democratic tenant provided in our Constitution; instead, it is designed to silence opposition and to intimidate. It is also unnecessary, as Ohio's existing laws already address trespass and damage to infrastructure.

Our farmers face threats to their livelihood and ability to provide food for our communities. At the same time, as a society, we go to great lengths to protect the interests of private industries that profit immensely from providing public goods while neglecting any commonsense protection of people, our natural resources, and our food system. We give scant thought to protecting the land on which we all depend for growing food or the independent family farmers who are the backbone of a resilient food system. This backwards set of priorities is, at best, ironic, as well as dangerously short-sighted. We respectfully request the Judiciary Committee to err on the side of Constitutionally-protected individual liberties and vote no on SB 250.

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