



Ohio Fair Managers Association
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Chairman Kick, Ranking Member O'Brien and all members of the House Finance Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you this morning on behalf of the Ohio Fair Managers Association (OFMA).

The OFMA has been working diligently on behalf of Ohio's 95 county and independent fairs as well as the Ohio State Fair to survive the economic side effects of COVID-19. While not out of the woods yet, we are optimistic that this year will be more prosperous than 2020.

The financial losses sustained in 2020 by county agricultural societies have been difficult to manage. There was some help from the state in the availability of CARES funds, but that has not made many fairs whole or even close to whole. In addition to the losses felt because of the limitation or cancelation of an annual fair exhibition, fairs have also lost rental income. Many groups rent our fairgrounds to host events like swap meets, weddings, antique shows, horse shows, commodity shows and more. Our fairs rely on this income and it was all but lost last year. We estimate that in 2019 our fairs brought in over \$14 million in non-fair related rentals. This funding source dried up in 2020.

These fairgrounds are incurring deferred maintenance and repairs on account and have no meaningful cash flow to help them keep up. This deferral will have long term devastating effects. A cash infusion is needed to help fairs get their facilities in shape to operate. That is why we are here today to ask for your support.

We are asking the legislature to amend House Bill 110 to provide funding and assistance to fairs. In the previous budget, House Bill 166, there was included a \$4.7 million grant program. We are asking that the legislature approve that grant program again in HB 110. We also ask that you consider not including a match component this year. The OFMA was able to work with the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the Governor's office on a blanket waiver to the match in 2020 and that was very helpful in allowing our fairs to participate in the grant program. Our county fairs just don't have the funds to come up with a match at this time.

The OFMA is also asking for an infusion of general revenue funds to support your county fairs. We know our communities value these events that are steeped in tradition and we want to ensure they are still here for generation to come. We are facing obstacles like never before. Many of our local fairs are hanging on by a financial thread and would very much appreciate your support. We recognize that this funding is being considered as part of other legislation to distribute COVID relief funds. We will be watching that process closely.

It is important to note, that in addition to supporting our grounds and annual fair exhibition, we provide a financial benefit to our communities on a whole. We have pulled together some financial impact data from our members. Ohio's county and Independent fairs generated \$111 million in revenue and expensed out over \$110 million back into the local economy. These same 94 fairs generated an additional estimate of over \$111 million in economic impact from the county fairs alone. This doesn't take into account other events on the grounds that operate 12 months a year.

Our midways are filled with small businesses selling delicious food and providing other entertainment to our fairgoers. We are a showcase for Junior Fair and provide a showcase for the youth to show and auction their animals and other projects. We are a platform for charities, law enforcement, and other non-profits to reach communities and also raise funds for their mission. Our communities rely on us and that is why we are here relying on you in the General Assembly.

We thank this committee for your time today and would appreciate support for an amendment to help county fairs survive this pandemic and shutdowns.