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**Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Presentation on the Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association
Tadd Nicholson, Executive Director
Tuesday, March 23, 2021**

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee; thank you for allowing the Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association to discuss our organization with you today. My goal presenting before you today is to explain to you our purpose, how we operate, and how we can assist this Committee moving forward.

Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association is a strategic partnership with the Ohio Corn Marketing Program, commonly referred to as the Ohio Corn Checkoff, and the Ohio Small Grains Marketing Program, or Ohio Small Grains Checkoff, that receives checkoff dollars from the sale of wheat, barley, rye, and oats.

By way of review on Checkoffs. The Ohio Corn Checkoff was approved by the Ohio General Assembly and an affirmative vote of farmers and started in 1989. Many of you remember the farm economy of the 1980's, it was bold action of farmers to decide that they needed a group to help them collectively develop and expand markets, fund research, promotion, and provide education about corn. The Ohio Corn Checkoff is a voluntary program that collects $\frac{3}{4}$ of a penny per bushel. If an Ohio farmer wants a refund of this assessment, they are entitled to that within 30 days of the sale. The Ohio Corn Checkoff is led by a grower elected board of directors.

The Small Grains Checkoff was approved in 2008. Functioning similarly to the Ohio Corn Checkoff, funds are restricted to helping to develop and expand markets, research, and promotion and education purposes. The Ohio Small Grains Checkoff is a voluntary, self-help program that allows for the collection of half of one percent of net market price assessment by all first purchasers of the grain. Farmers may ask for a refund of this checkoff. The Ohio Small Grains Checkoff is also managed by a grower elected board of director.

At its core, the Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association is a collective membership driven organization of nearly 2,000 Ohio farmers. The association's primary goal is to advocate, promote and enhance opportunities for Ohio grain farmers. Membership in the association helps members to grow and sustain farm operation and their role in Ohio agriculture.

We firmly believe that Ohio farmers are stronger together and we work to educate regulators, consumers, and legislators about Ohio's corn and small grains industries. Agriculture is often cited as Ohio's largest industry and we are proud of that. Policy makers like yourselves are bombarded with information, and we strive to be a trusted, non-partisan clearinghouse of accurate and trusted information.



Our association members take an active role in advocating for farmers at both the state and federal levels of government. The grower association prides itself on staying ahead of issues that have the potential to impact the way farmers make a living. Policymakers need to know what issues are important to Ohio grain farmers and even more important, how they can assist. That is what we strive to coordinate – providing solid thoughts and ideas that are accurate and respected.

Ohio Corn & Wheat is very involved in many issues that this committee is hearing about and dealing with – from improving water quality, reducing nutrient runoff to bringing steps that can immediately be undertaken to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions while at the same time providing solid opportunities to support our rural Ohio communities. Ohio agriculture and Ohio corn and small grain farmers have solutions.

I would like to briefly share with you some of our legislative initiatives for the coming year:

Of utmost importance is our continued work to support H2Ohio. Promoting water quality and soil health remains our top priority, and H2Ohio's early successes have been critical to addressing concerns in the Western Lake Erie Basin. Because of you, our grower members in that region of the state have access to critical funds to participate in voluntary measures that are proven to protect our most vital resources. Ohio's grain producers rely on healthy soils, clean water, and innovation to remain profitable. By partnering with our fellow H2Ohio stakeholders, our association believes we can create a comprehensive approach to solving the problem of harmful algal blooms.

Secondly, we are working on an important measure currently moving through the Ohio House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee. House Bill 165, sponsored by Representative Riordan McClain will promote investment in biofuels infrastructure by providing a non-refundable, temporary tax credit to fuel retailers who dispense higher blends of ethanol for consumers. Unleaded 88 contains a 15% ethanol blend that provides a higher octane than regular gasoline while also promoting reduced greenhouse gas emissions – developing both of these benefits at a lower price for consumers. While Unleaded 88 has experienced significant gains across the country, Ohio currently lags behind other midwestern states for consumer access to this cleaner burning, more cost-effective fuel. By incentivizing retailers to invest in modern dispensing equipment, we believe consumers will gain that access. Through their normal consumer practices, they'll help us reduce harmful carbon emissions while also saving between five and ten cents on every gallon of fuel they buy. As that bill moves through the house, we will work with members of this chamber to introduce companion legislation so Ohio's drivers can begin benefitting as soon as possible.

Lastly, we are supporting House Bill 93 which is also working its way through the House committee process at this time. That bill would provide a temporary tax credit to promote new and beginning farmers as they transition into ownership roles. By creating a financial management certification program within the Department of Agriculture, we believe those new farmers will be set up to prosper and carry on Ohio's proud agricultural tradition.

While our organization works to address many more issues, these three are of immediate urgency and we look forward to working with this General Assembly to secure their passage. Thank you again for the opportunity to present before the Committee. I would be happy to answer any question you may have.

