



Pickaway Ag and Event Center
415 Lancaster Pike
Circleville, OH 43113
740-474-2085

Good morning Chairman Koehler, Vice Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Brent and all members of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in regard to Senate Bill 375 on behalf of the Pickaway County Fair and all county and independent fairs in this Great State of Ohio. My name is Von Cremeans and I am currently the President of the Pickaway County Agricultural Society, the governing body of the Pickaway County Fair.

I extend my thanks to this committee for not only the opportunity to be in front of you today, but also for your leadership and efforts that enabled my county to proceed with a 2020 county fair, that consisted of both Senior Fair events as well as Junior Fair events. In the months, weeks and days leading up to our fair, we had developed various plans that were contingent on the varying orders as brought forth by the Ohio Director of Public Health through the progression of protocols developed for the COVID-19 pandemic. As you probably are aware, county fairs are planned and managed by county fair boards, comprised solely of volunteers, and it was this group of volunteers who invested countless hours to be prepared for whatever scenario allowed for as much of a “normal” fair as possible. We were committed to making sure our youth and other community members could showcase their projects and talents to honor the time they have devoted to the culture and traditions that promote Ohio’s Agricultural Industry.

Again, with much thanks extended to this committee and OFMA, the Responsible Restart Ohio protocols for county fairs as released on June 16, 2020 allowed Pickaway County to proceed with a full fair, to commence on June 21st. Our group of volunteers took swift action with 5 days we had to be sure the safety protocols were in place and followed, to the best of our ability. We invested in signage for the fairgrounds, displayed in various areas

of the grounds, including but not limited to entry gates, buildings and bathrooms, to remind the public of proper social distancing as well as encouraging the use of masks and a reminder of the indicators/symptoms of COVID and our ask to not enter the grounds/facilities if any of those symptoms existed. Additionally, we had hand sanitizing stations placed at all entrances and exits to the grounds and buildings, as well as throughout the midway where the food and rides were located. Sanitizing wipes were frequently used on all common surfaces and our bathrooms underwent a frequent and rigorous daily cleaning schedule. Furthermore, we also had all Junior Fair exhibitors sign a release that they were free of any COVID-related symptoms and had not knowingly had any COVID exposure in recent weeks. The aforementioned protocols are just to name a few of the additional precautions we took to ensure the safety of all fair-goers, in compliance with the Responsible Restart Ohio Orders implemented on June 16, 2020.

While I state that we implemented all safety protocols as required by the previously mentioned orders, and my board feels we successfully hosted a safe and healthy fair, you may be familiar with a report from our local health department that would indicate otherwise. Before you use that report as a basis on which to formulate any thoughts or opinions for Senate Bill 375, I'd ask you to research the data in that report, as it contained many inaccuracies having been written by employees of the local health department who had little to no experience in the health field, let alone experience with a pandemic, and in all actuality was a report not approved by the governing health board, itself. One glaring issue with the report is that contact tracing supposedly traced 19 active COVID cases back to the fair, including one death, while the community was well aware that the majority of the COVID cases were actually contact traced to a local church but separation of church and state required that information be omitted from the report, which then implicated the fair to be at the center of the spike in cases. We would like it to be known that the widow of the deceased gentleman had written us a letter to let us know that neither she nor her husband nor any family member had been at the fair, to dispel the fair's association with his positive COVID diagnosis and resulting death. While the initial report has been retracted and

edited, we don't yet have a copy of that report to share with you today. Considering our fair was held at a time when other events and institutions, including but not limited to daycares and churches, were also beginning to reopen after the shutdown in accordance with the Responsible Restart Orders of May 30th, it would be expected that the community would see a spike in positive diagnoses of COVID-19 in the mid-June to early July time frame. Even if those 19 cases had legitimately been tied to the our fair, based on our attendance of over 21,000 fair-goers, this would have indicated a .09% infection rate. In addition to the multitude of errors in the report lacking factual evidence, the report was also based on the plan we submitted to the health department on June 6, 2020 which was to be used as the basis for hosting our annual fair, which didn't reflect the allowances we were later granted by the orders released on June 16, 2020 which allowed us to operate differently than the June 6th proposal would have indicated.

Again, we are confident that our fair was a safe and healthy success and we are confident all other county and independent fairs can offer the same. Since our fair in June, our Pickaway Ag and Event Center has also hosted two Dairy Shows with over 700 head at each show, two hogs shows with over 400 head at each show as well as several horse shows and 0 cases of COVID have been traced back to those events.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I thank you for your time and attention today. I would be glad to answer any questions you might have.