



Working together for Ohio farmers to advance agriculture and strengthen our communities.

**Proponent Testimony Senate Bill 159
Senate Ways and Means Committee
Nathan Brown, District 20 State Trustee
May 13, 2020**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony on behalf of Ohio Farm Bureau for Senate Bill 159. I represent Farm Bureau members in Adams, Brown, Clermont, and Highland counties.

I am a first generation farmer. Along with my wife, Jennifer, we grow corn, soybeans and wheat and operate a cow/calf herd. Every day is not the same on our operation. We have cattle that are fed and checked every day, but after that anything goes depending on the season. Our days may be filled with 16-18 hours of jobs to get completed and that can be one of the best and hardest parts of being a farmer. Then you throw in the challenges of having three young children and trying to maintain a balanced family life with them, and it can make us very busy.

I did not grow up on a farm, but one of my earliest memories is crawling through the fence to follow the tobacco planter in my neighbor's field. I began working on that farm at age 12, and was fortunate enough through my neighbor's generosity and knowledge and help from many others to take my first steps in agriculture. Many beginning farmers are not given the same opportunity I was, and even though I would not qualify for the beginning farmer tax credit program now, I want to ensure new farmers moving forward can get a foothold in the agriculture industry.

The agriculture industry is extremely difficult to break into if you or your family do not have a background in farming. High amounts of capital are needed to invest in land, equipment, labor, crops or livestock, financial management plans, and compliance with regulations just to get started. New farmland is not readily available, so there is restricted access to the ground required, adding yet another barrier to individuals who are looking to start a career in farming. The current farming population is aging and new farmers are not joining the industry or remaining in agriculture. By giving established farmers a tax credit for leasing or selling to a beginning farmer, this bill will help those looking to exit agriculture keep the land in production by passing it on to a beginning farmer.

The future of agriculture is ever changing and looks bright to this southern Ohio boy, but it is challenging for beginning farmers. SB 159 would give beginning farmers a chance to pursue their passion and enter the agriculture industry.