



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

**Proponent Testimony Senate Bill 159
Senate Ways and Means Committee
Rose Hartschuh, Northwest Region State Trustee
May 13, 2020**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation and its members, thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony on Senate Bill 159, creating the Ohio Beginning Farmer Tax Credit Program.

On behalf of the Farm Bureau members I represent, I'd like to begin by thanking the sponsor of the bill, Senator Peterson, for his passion for agriculture and willingness to introduce this crucial legislation in Ohio. Beginning farmers are grateful for your understanding and leadership on this issue.

Farming is essential to my husband's and my livelihood. I am involved in the agricultural industry in a variety of ways. I sell corn, soybean, and cover crop seed to area farmers. My husband and I partnered with two other farm families to revitalize a neglected farm property in Bucyrus, which now offers a farm market in one barn and an event venue in another. We also offer agricultural education activities on our farm. Most substantially, my husband Greg, and I farm full-time with his parents. We raise corn, soybeans, alfalfa, 150 sheep, and we milk 180 registered Holstein cattle. The most important thing that we raise on our farm, however, is our twin seven-year-old boys, Dwight and Jordan. We hope that one day, if they so choose, they will have the opportunity to find their place in the food and farming industry.

Although my husband is the fourth generation to farm on his family farm, the transition from college to career has not been seamless. My mother and father-in-law started milking in 1982, and although the farm has grown over time, it has not necessarily grown large enough to support multiple families from the same operation. As a result, Greg and I have worked to develop our own side businesses to allow us to farm, which is where our passion truly lies. We have worked to grow our own personal farming operation while still maintaining a day-to-day role in the family dairy farm. Two ways we have worked to grow our personal farming operation is through purchasing our own acreage and establishing a sheep enterprise, consisting of 100 head of breeding sheep. We know that our dairy farm is not substantial enough to support another family making their livelihood from the cows; therefore, our personal goal is to establish our own farm businesses to be able to allow our children to one day come back and farm with us.

Greg and I are constantly fostering relationships with our neighbors and hope to one day be afforded the opportunity to rent additional acres to farm or to purchase land if presented with the



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chance. Additional acres can help our bottom line while also helping us grow at a rate to support the next generation. Within the last several years, there have been multiple acres change hands in our community. Whether they have transitioned as a result of an older farmer retiring or through children who no longer live locally parting with their family ground, land has come under the management of different farmers. However, as young people, land purchase prices and cash rent prices, tend to stay just above what we can afford. Ultimately, the land has transitioned to older, more established farmers, who have the ability to cash flow purchases with greater equity on their balance sheets and more cash in the bank to put down.

Senate Bill 159 could be a great asset for farmers like us who want to responsibly grow their farming operations. It gives us a chance to negotiate with landowners and helps close the gap between the capital we have available and the capital available by older farmers. While it may not help us in every instance, it definitely cannot hurt.