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Ohio House Agriculture and Conservation Committee
Proponent Testimony – HB239

May 4, 2021

Good afternoon Chairman Koehler, Vice Chair Creech, Ranking Member Brent and members of the House Agriculture and Conservation Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 239. My name is Adam Ward, I serve as Director of Government Affairs for the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) at The Ohio State University. CFAES serves Ohioans in all 88 counties through delivery of science-based programming to better their lives, businesses, and communities by way of Ohio State Extension.

In 1862, the enacted Morrill Act allowed states to establish land grant universities for the study of agriculture. Ohio established the Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College, which later became The Ohio State University. Thus, CFAES serves as the cornerstone college that originally gave our institution part of its name and has been a critical force in shaping the university for 150 years through its research, teaching, and extension.

In alignment with this land-grant tradition and per the Ohio Revised Code Section 3335.38, The Ohio State University Board of Trustees is required to “establish a farm financial management institute in OSU extension to train interested and qualified persons to assist farmers needing help with farm financial management problems.”

HB 239 reaffirms this commitment and renames this institute to better reflect the broad range of audiences served including farmers, farm managers, financial lenders, agricultural teachers, agency personnel, and OSU faculty and extension educators who directly interact with agricultural producers and support the state’s \$125 billion agricultural economy. The audiences served by the institute will then be able to take their expertise to their farms, communities, schools, and counties around the state.

Housed in OSU Extension, and in partnership with the college’s Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics, the CFAES Farm Production, Policy, and Financial Management Institute will serve as a unified center for the integration, translation, and communication of CFAES’ farm management and ag policy presence that addresses critical food, agricultural, and environmental issues affecting Ohioans.

The institute will be critical in supporting the changing areas of focus for OSU Extension, in response to the changing demands of the state’s agricultural economy, by unifying expertise across areas that include agricultural marketing, budgeting and financial management, land use, labor law, agricultural trade, agricultural and environmental policy, and others. The institute will allow OSU Extension to

further the scope of the current Farm Office, which provides research and outreach on the legal and economic challenges of agricultural production. The Farm Office reaches a statewide audience through blog posts, legal bulletins, resources on taxes and profitability, and workshops held throughout Ohio on topics such as estate planning, tax laws related to agriculture, cash rent and farmland values. Renaming the institute will allow OSU Extension to build upon the success of the Farm Office.

The current and emerging challenges to Ohio's agricultural industry cannot be overstated. Agriculture has entered its fourth revolution – a digital revolution. From inconsistent climatic conditions to invasive species like the Spotted-Lanternfly, from a volatile international trade environment to pandemic-induced constraints on the food supply - these are challenges that the Farm Production, Policy, and Financial Management Institute is well positioned to triage and effectively address through its expertise and by leveraging partnerships with key stakeholders.

Farmers and agribusinesses across Ohio rely heavily on the unbiased research and education provided by The Ohio State University and OSU Extension to guide them in maximizing yields and farm profitability in an environmentally friendly manner.

Ohioans have improved their yields through research completed at the university and applied on farms around the state. OSU Extension Water Quality Associates are working directly with farmers and other agencies to identify and validate those practice that help us improve our water quality.

We look forward to how Ohio agriculture will benefit from the centralized synergy created by the CFAES Farm Production, Policy, and Financial Management Institute, a responsive resource to the state of Ohio in meeting the ever-growing challenges in providing a sustainable agricultural system in our state.

The vision and mission of the institute is fully aligned with the university's vision to be the model 21st - century public, land-grant, research, urban, community-engaged institution and CFAES' grand challenge areas of Sustainability, One Health, the Rural-Urban Interface, and Preparing the Next Generation of Scientists and Leaders. In fact, we're proud of the plans to build and broaden partnerships between the institute and the university's Fisher College of Business, the Moritz College of Law, the John Glenn College of Public Affairs, and others to further cross-disciplinary reach and amplify positive impact across the communities we serve.

On behalf of Cathann Kress, Vice President and Dean and all of us at CFAES and OSU Extension – we thank the General Assembly once again for continuing to support CFAES' mission to sustain life through its teaching, research, and extension.

Thank you, Chair Koehler, and members of the committee for allowing me to speak on HB 239, and I'm happy to answer any questions.