



# OHIO DAIRY PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

*Supporting Ohio's dairy production industry; optimizing profitability and productivity;  
addressing issues that affect dairy producers*

Ohio House Agriculture and Conservation Committee  
Proponent Testimony

Karl Wedemeyer, Board Member and Dairy Farmer  
Ohio Dairy Producers Association

House Bill 239

May 4, 2021

Chairman Koehler, Vice Chair Creech, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of House Bill 239, which will support the Farm Financial Management Policy Institute (FFMPI) at The Ohio State University Extension at the College of Food, Agriculture, Environmental Sciences (CFAES).

My name is Karl Wedemeyer, I am a dairy farmer in Marion County and a board member of the Ohio Dairy Producers Association (ODPA). I am a proud alum of The Ohio State University where I attended the Agricultural Technical Institute in Wooster, earning an associate degree in Dairy Science and earning a bachelor's degree in Animal Science here in Columbus. ODPA is proud to support Ohio State University's Farm Financial Management Policy Institute and we thank Rep. Creech for his leadership on this measure.

By way of background, the ODPA is a grassroots legislative, research, and producer education organization, representing dairy farmers from across the state, regardless of farm size, breed or production strategy, marketing preference, or political affiliation. Ohio is home to 252,000 dairy cows that live on 1,650 farms and produce 628 million gallons of milk annually, valued at just over \$1 billion and dairy farms create an economic impact in excess of \$4 billion. The average herd size is 148 cows. Ohio is ranked 11 in total milk production in the nation, and 5<sup>th</sup> in the number of processing and receiving plants. The total economic impact of dairy products produced and sold in Ohio is \$23.8 billion, which generates 115,000 jobs for Ohioans. And as a fun fact, Ohio is #1 in Swiss cheese and sour cream production.

ODPA is pleased to see HB 239 introduced and receiving proponent testimony today to help fund the start-up costs of this endeavor at The Ohio State University. Under the Ohio Revised Code, OSU 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 will give them the needed language changes and financial support to cover the start-up costs of the FFMPI to bring on the necessary staff to get this operation up and running.

OSU plans to focus in the areas of agricultural marketing, agricultural finance, agricultural production and risk management, human resources, agricultural policy, and agricultural law.

There is no question the need for state funding to build capacity for the Farm Financial Management Policy Institute.

Establishing this institute is foundational to the needs of Ohio's dairy industry and to the dairy farmers who have relied on OSU faculty in past decades to provide insights, analysis, and recommendations for dairy policy at the federal level. Since the retirement of OSU's dairy marketing and economic faculty several years ago, Ohio has lost its prominence in providing a voice into federal milk pricing policy, risk management, and dairy farm management policy.

This institute will lay the foundation for OSU to reset and re-establish its role, by first identifying the needs of farmers and then proactively leading the way in serving those needs. ODPa supports this institute and will continue to press forward to raise the awareness of OSU's need to reclaim its leadership role in providing input into federal dairy policy, dairy pricing, dairy product marketing, risk management, farm management, environmental and resource policy, and agriculture trade on behalf of Ohio's farmers.

In summary, ODPa supports the Farm Financial Management Policy Institute (FFMPI) at The Ohio State University Extension at the College of Food, Agriculture, Environmental Sciences (CFAES) with anticipation that it will provide our dairy farmers with support and assistance to help them succeed in today's highly volatile business climate. Each year Ohio loses in excess of 100 dairy farms who are unable to sustain the economic challenges and these farm closures are having a negative impact on the rural communities that rely heavily on food production. We respectfully request the support of Ohio's legislature to effectively fund this program.

Again, thank you for the opportunity and happy to answer any questions you may have.