



**State Representative Juanita Brent
22nd House District**

**State Representative Bill Dean
71st House District**

Sponsor Testimony - House Bill 568

Chairman Jones, Vice Chairman Klopfenstein, and the members of the House Agriculture Committee: Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 568, the Soil Health Taskforce Bill.

HB 568 creates a Healthy Soils Task Force whose only purpose is to develop a comprehensive healthy soils initiative, with an action plan and timeline to carry out the initiative. This is a commonsense, bipartisan bill.

Agriculture is the number-one contributor to Ohio's economy. Our soil is the foundation of agriculture. This bill allows for the necessary analysis of the state of Ohio's soil and how to best address its needs to improve soil health. The Benefits are clear. Our soil regulates water, sustains plant and animal life, and absorbs excess carbon from the atmosphere. Improving our soil health is improving Ohio's health.

Everything that we eat comes from the ground. Everything that we eat, eats what comes from the ground. All of us need to be concerned about our soil.

This taskforce is made up of representatives, from academic experts in agriculture, soil and water conservation districts, actual farmers, and

Ohio farm organizations. This taskforce would work hand in hand with the Federal Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency, and the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S.D.A.

Improving Ohio's soil health is the most effective way to increase our agricultural productivity and quality. This bill ensures the quality of the air we breathe and the food and water on our tables.

I will now turn it over to my joint sponsor, Representative Dean.

Chairman Jones, Vice Chairman Klopfenstein, and the members of the House Agriculture Committee: I too appear before you today to request your support for House Bill 568. A few years ago, I began maintaining beehives in my backyard as a hobby to teach my grandkids about God's creation. A few months ago, I visited the Agraria Center for Regenerative Practice near Yellow Springs in my district. I learned there that bees are actually critical to our soil health by spreading pollen and nectar, which can help improve soil microbial activity and nutrient cycling.

I believe that more should be done to preserve our soil for future generations, and the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association suggested that Rep. Brent and I join forces on this bill. We have been approached by both academia and industry regarding their support for this taskforce. Such proponents include Central State University, whose main campus is in Wilberforce within my district, and ScottsMiracle-Gro headquartered in Marysville.

We respectfully ask for this Committee to support House Bill 568 and we are happy to address any questions you may have. Thank you for your time this morning.