

House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

HB 135 Proponent Testimony

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Chairman Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and other members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on HB 135. Hello, my name is Megan Moorman and I am currently serving as the 2022-2023 Ohio Association of Agricultural Educators President. I am here today to speak in favor of House Bill 135 and how it will positively impact Agriculture Students across the state. Ohio Agriculture Teachers serve over 25,000 students each year, which according to the Ohio Department of Education makes up 18.65 percent of Career Technical Education Students and the largest CTE pathway in the state. Agriculture Education operates under a three circle model comprised of Classroom, FFA, and Supervised Agriculture Experiences (SAE). House Bill 135 will have the biggest impact on the FFA and SAE portions of Agriculture Education. It will allow Agriculture Teachers to advocate for their students and provide unique and individualized opportunities. Within the FFA we take many trips that expose students to leadership opportunities, job shadows, Career Development Events and Contests, Community Service, and so much more. This Bill would mostly benefit students who are going on individual trips and experiences where a teacher is not leading the trip and taking a group. This would allow students to miss school without fear of hurting their attendance records and potentially not being allowed to make up school work due to school and teacher policies at the discretion of an unexcused absence to an excused absence. Many districts and teachers have policies in place that either do not allow students to make up work when they have an unexcused absence or that is is

automatically docked a certain percentage when students are unexcused. This is designed to encourage students to be present in school which we can all agree does lead to success for students, however, sometimes there are experiences that far out weigh the life long benefits of a few missed days of class. Some examples of experiences students could gain from the passage of this bill and not having to choose between an unexcused absence and an FFA experience include showing livestock at the county fair, going on a job shadowing experience or limited internship experience with a local company, showing livestock at a state or national show, or competing in a rodeo, harvesting and/or planting crops, just to name a few. Agricultural Education students are some of the hardest-working kids out there. Experiences like this provide students with work ethic, perseverance, problem-solving skills, financial literacy, cultural awareness, and so much more that cannot get in a classroom. This bill would allow school districts to keep teachers in the classroom serving students and saving the district money on substitute teachers while providing individual students with unique opportunities. This Bill will allow Agriculture Students to earn Work Based Learning hours which not only are a part of program compliance for the state of Ohio but also can help students earn Industry Recognized Credentials, the Ohio Means Jobs Career Readiness Seal, and to build their resumes. In a survey conducted by OAAE in December of 2022 95 Agricultural Educators responded. There were responses from teachers within all 10 Ohio FFA Districts representing schools from rural, Urban, and Suburban areas. This also represents teachers from comprehensive high schools, career centers, and middle schools. 33 percent of respondents said their school districts currently do not excuse students' absences when attending shows such as: North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE), Quarter Horse Congress, County or State Fairs, etc. Teachers stated that students are afraid to miss school because they will not be allowed to turn in the assignments they missed and will fall

behind in class. One teacher stated that their school does count these experiences as excused absences as their school looks at it as an extension to the classroom, resume builder, leadership development, career exploration, etc. Our hope is that with the passage of House Bill 135, all students in the State of Ohio will have these opportunities and be able to explore Agricultural Pursuits without fear of falling behind in a class. Our students know they have to do the class work still and are more than willing to when given the opportunity. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.