



**Ohio Senate
Ways and Means Committee
HB 324 Proponent Testimony
Liz Funderburgh, Funderburgh Ag Services
June 12, 2024**

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the committee, I'm Liz Funderburgh, a farmer from Union County, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to be with you today and present testimony in support of House Bill 324. This narrowly focused, short term bill would promote expansion of domestic markets for Ohio-grown corn and, further, it will contribute to additional stability for the entirety of the grain value chain.

Beyond our family farm, I hope to share with you today a bit of my broader career experience in rural lending, grain marketing, and seed sales. Those experiences afford me a unique opportunity to see grain production and sales from nearly every angle, and inform my belief that this bill is a market-smart approach to promoting Ohio's number one industry, agriculture.

My husband Matt and I operate Darby Pine Farms and Funderburgh Ag Services, an average family owned farming operation and seed sales business respectively. In partnership with my father-in-law, we are the second generation farm. What keeps us going strong, and able to plan for the future, is a diverse set of markets. We grow corn and soybeans that can be used for feed, fuel, and exports. All three are important, but domestic markets are the most beneficial. When we keep the end market use of our grain closer to home, we are able to retain more of the value of that commodity inside the farm gate. Those domestic markets also insulate us from the harmful effects of trade disputes and international conflict.

Strong ethanol markets in Ohio have made and kept grain farming profitable. And while we will always search out the best market opportunity for our grain, we know that domestic market competition for our product is the best way for us to build our family-owned business.

Prior to becoming a full time farm operator, I also spent fifteen years in the agricultural finance and grain marketing businesses. I've worked with countless Ohio farming operations to source the capital necessary to thrive and expand. I've helped them work through the lean years too. I've also been on the other end of the line trying to secure the best price for grain farmers. That experience taught me that Ohio's farmers are price takers, not price setters. Our commodities follow the Chicago Board of Trade, and are subject to macroeconomic and global forces farmers simply can't control.

But we can work tirelessly to find new end products for our grain. Since higher blends of ethanol, like Unleaded88, have come into production, the demand for our grain has stabilized, and sometimes grown.

Those realized gains allow a farm like mine to make investments in new equipment and new conservation techniques. As consumers drive on higher blends of ethanol, it drives Ohio's rural economy to prosperity.

I'm asking for your support of House Bill 324 today. As the committee deliberates, I hope you'll keep in mind the far-reaching benefits of market opportunity. When proven products, like Unleaded88, can gain access to new customers, there's a tangible impact. Consumers save through competition; farmers like me can build stronger businesses; and the suppliers who support our businesses maintain strong, reliable customer bases. This minimal investment by the state would yield big impacts across Ohio's economy.

Thank you, again for this opportunity to testify and ask for your support on House Bill 324.