



*Forging a partnership between farmers and consumers.
•Working together for Ohio's farmers•*

Beth Vanderkooi
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Senate Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources
HB 276

Good morning Senator Hite, Ranking member Schiavoni, and members of the Senate Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Beth Vanderkooi. I am the director of state policy for Ohio Farm Bureau. Thank you for this opportunity to testify as a proponent of House Bill 276. With more than 214,000 member families, Ohio Farm Bureau is Ohio's largest general farm organization. Our members can be found in each of Ohio's 88 counties. Their farms are all sizes – from the smallest to the largest of farms. They are conventional, niche, and organic farmers. They live in cities, suburbs, and rural areas and produce virtually every kind of food, fiber, or bio-based fuel imaginable. They are advocates, foodies, and small businessmen and women.

Agriculture is our number one industry, employing one in seven Ohioans and contributing \$107 billion to our economy. Individuals, partnerships, and family corporations own 98 percent of Ohio's farms.

Central to our work at Ohio Farm Bureau is helping to promote regulatory and legal consistency for Ohio's farmers and to identify and support value-added opportunity for farmers and agricultural products. It was in this spirit that we became active in supporting HB 276.

As passed by the House, HB 276 clarifies that on-farm production of biodiesel, biomass energy, electric or heat energy, and biologically derived methane gas that occurs secondary to or incidental to farming retains the agricultural treatment for zoning and CAUV, as long as at least fifty percent of the feedstock or starting material is generated on that farm. The fifty percent threshold was identified as reasonable and is the same as the threshold identified for farm markets. Encouraging the use of technologies such as methane digesters not only promotes alternatives for farmers, but also could be exceptionally helpful in handling livestock or agricultural waste. The bill also clarifies that a digester located on a concentrated animal feeding facility may be permitted by the Ohio Department of Agriculture and adds provisions regarding agricultural production of algae. We are supportive of these measures as well as two amendments I anticipate being considered today. HB 276 is not only a priority issue of the Farm Bureau, but it has been identified as a Key Vote for the 129th General Assembly.

Thank you for allowing me to be here today in support of this legislation. We are especially appreciative of the work of Representative Buchy, Senator Gentile, their staffs, LSC, and the other interested parties over the past few months as we worked through some incredibly complicated technical issues to get us here today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.