



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

HB 482
Senate Finance Committee
Beth Vanderkooi, Ohio Farm Bureau
March 28, 2012

Good morning Chairman Widener, Ranking Member Sawyer, and members of the Senate Finance Committee.

My name is Beth Vanderkooi. I am director of state policy for the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. The Ohio Farm Bureau is a grassroots organization representing more than 214,000 member families located in all 88 of Ohio's counties. While our membership encompasses a broad swath of Ohioans from farmer to consumer and all stages in between, our policy is developed in a grassroots process by representatives from our more than 60,000 farmer members. Agriculture is Ohio's number one industry, adding \$107 billion to our economy every year.

Investing in critical infrastructure without encumbering our children with excessive future debt is a priority to Ohio Farm Bureau. As state policy makers identify capital budget priorities, we support critical investments in agriculture. Ohio voters have overwhelmingly supported passage of Clean Ohio programs. To the extent that dollars are available, Ohio Farm Bureau supports including Clean Ohio funding in the State Capital Budget process beyond the \$6 million currently appropriated for trails.

As you know, Clean Ohio was initially passed as a \$400 million bond program in 2000. In 2008, voters overwhelmingly approved the renewal of the program. Ohio Farm Bureau has been a longtime supporter of the Clean Ohio program, especially the Agricultural Easement Purchase Program. The Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase program has preserved more than 20,000 acres of Ohio Farmland. Farm Bureau also supports the use of Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation funds for the preservation of farms that contain creeks, streams, woods, or natural wetlands.

We support the preservation of prime land (classes I and II) and other land especially capable of dairy, equine, livestock, fruit, forestry, and specialty crop production by encouraging involvement in both agricultural easement purchases and through voluntary agricultural easement donations.

Ohio lawmakers can appropriate up to \$100 million non-brownfield programs under the Clean Ohio Program in 2012. We encourage any capital appropriations bill enacted by the General Assembly to include Clean Ohio funding, including the appropriate amounts for Farmland Preservation.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee might have.