



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

**Spencer Waugh
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Senate Agriculture, Environment, and Natural Resources
SB 309 Proponent Testimony**

Good morning, Chairman Hite, ranking member Gentile and members of the Senate Agriculture, Environment, and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Spencer Waugh. I am the director of legislative relations for the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify as a proponent of Senate Bill 309.

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. They live in cities, suburbs, and rural areas and produce virtually every kind of food, fiber, or bio-based fuel imaginable.

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.

Our organization is excited to partner with the Ohio Produce Growers and Marketers Association (OPGMA) to support SB 309, an Ohio Farm Bureau priority issue for 2012 and will be a Farm Bureau Key Vote. SB 309 would establish the framework to allow for the creation of voluntary marketing agreements based on certain commodities, regions, or a combination thereof that would set production standards for food safety that would meet or exceed current state and federal regulations.

This bill will help Ohio expand economic opportunity and job creation in Ohio agriculture. Marketing agreements are valuable tools that Ohio farmers can use to achieve tailored marketing, production, research, and educational efforts with the goal of improving Ohio agriculture's position within state, national, and international markets.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, along with several states, including California, Arizona, and Wisconsin, currently permit similar agricultural marketing agreements. Adopting similar legislation will help give Ohio farmers another opportunity to market their products while working to better meet the requirements of the recently enacted federal food safety law. These agreements create the opportunity to empower Ohio's farmers to take a hands-on approach to

protect and promote Ohio products through a valid and robust voluntary food safety program that will allow them to meet anticipated federal requirements and standards.

Most importantly, these voluntary marketing agreements will be for farmers and managed by farmers, but the agreements will be established through the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Agreements will be self-supporting through fees paid by participants in each voluntary agreement and will have no additional cost to the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 309. I would be glad to take any questions at this time.