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

Dr. Larry Antosch  
Ohio Farm Bureau  
House Agriculture and Natural Resources  
HB 473  
April 24, 2012

Chairman Hall, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the committee, my name is Larry Antosch. I am Senior Director of Policy Development and Environmental Policy for the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 473 today.

With members in all of Ohio's 88 counties, the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF) is the largest general farm organization in the state of Ohio. Our members produce virtually every kind of agricultural commodity and as a result, OFBF is strongly interested in Ohio's environmental and natural resource policies and their potential impact to sustaining a viable agbioresource industry. OFBF policies support the development of programs that are scientifically based, economically sound and whenever possible, delivered in a flexible and voluntary manner.

For almost a decade, OFBF has been engaged in the discussions related to the implementation of the Great Lakes Charter Annex of 2001. OFBF was asked to represent agricultural interests by serving as a member of the Council of Great Lakes Governors Advisory Committee, established to assist in the implementation of the Annex. This effort culminated with the drafting of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact. The Compact is embodied in HB 416, which was signed by Governor Strickland in June 2008 and became effective on December 8, 2008. Section 3 of HB 416 established an advisory board to assist in the development of recommendations for legislation necessary to implement and effectuate the requirements of the Compact. OFBF had the honor of being appointed by then President of the Ohio Senate Bill Harris to serve on the Ohio Great Lakes Compact Advisory Board representing agricultural interests in the basin.

In both cases, OFBF advocated for the unique nature of agricultural water use and withdrawals – low volume of water withdrawal, ninety-day water withdrawal averaging period to reflect the typical growing season, seasonal nature of water use, intermittent water withdrawal (only if needed due to shortage of rainfall) and high water use efficiency. According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resource Water Withdrawal Registry Program, Ag/Irrigation water use sector which includes livestock watering, irrigation, golf course irrigation, nursery and landscaping accounted for slightly more than one-half of one percent (0.6%) of the total surface and ground water withdrawals in 2010.

The Compact prohibits all new or increased diversions of water resources from the Great Lakes Basin to areas outside of the Basin with limited exceptions to those communities the straddle the watershed divide. In addition, it establishes a decision-making standard for the management and regulation of new or increased withdrawals and consumptive uses of such water resources.

The Compact has three key components that must be addressed by the state regulatory program:

- The state must establish threshold triggers for new or increased withdrawals,
- The regulatory program must conform to the decision making standard in the Compact, and
- The requirements of the Compact cannot supersede existing state or common law or the state's constitution.

HB 473 accomplishes these objectives in a manner that promotes stewardship of Ohio's water resources - ensuring a safe sustainable supply of water to meet the needs of today's and future generations, protects existing private property rights associated with surface and ground water, and promotes economic development and job creation by recognizing that abundant fresh water is a highly desirable commodity. The threshold levels and ninety-day averaging period in HB 473 are consistent with those established in the Compact and HB. 416.

Environmental stewardship is a priority for Ohio's farmers, which is why we continue to work to adopt state laws and regulations that promote water quality and maintain access to Ohio's water resources for navigation, commerce, fishery, and recreation through sound science and the protection of private property rights, including the right to reasonable use. We have appreciated the opportunity to work with legislators, Governor Kasich, and a wide breadth of interested parties on the current version of the legislation, which we believe is a balanced compromise. OFBF has identified the passage of legislation governing the Great Lakes Compact as one of our 2012 State Priority Issues and we urge the favorable passage of HB 473.

Thank you, Chairman Hall and the members of the committee for this opportunity to provide testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.