



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

April 8, 2013

The Honorable «First_Name» «Last_Name»
«Job_Title»
Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear «Job_Title» «Last_Name»:

As you continue your deliberations over HB 59 (Amstutz), I would like to bring to your attention items the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation would like to see addressed in the bill. While this is not a comprehensive list of all items our organization has interest in, it is an outline of our budget priorities.

Farm Bureau's highest priority is support for Ohio State University's Extension program and Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC). We ask you to support a 3.1 percent increase in each of these programs' line items. Extension plays an important role in having successful and engaging 4-H programs and offers educational opportunities on everything from crop insurance to battling invasive pests to nutrient management and water quality. The research OARDC conducts benefits all of society by helping keep Ohio waters clean, and by producing foods that are diverse, abundant, affordable and safe.

We also ask you to take action to restore full funding to the Agricultural Technical Institute (ATI) in Wooster. Under the current budget proposal, ATI sustained a significant reduction in funding. The program's track record is remarkable, serving as the nation's number one producer of two-year Associate Degree graduates in the areas of food and agriculture. In fact, within four months of graduation, 99 percent of ATI graduates are either continuing on in school pursuing a Bachelors degree or are gainfully employed in the food and fiber sector. The graduates of this program represent the future of Ohio agriculture. Funding to support ATI's hands-on learning environment is critical.

Farm Bureau also supports restoration of funding for the Ohio Sea Grant program. At a time when water quality issues and protecting Lake Erie have become increasingly important, the research being conducted as a part of the Sea Grant program is essential. A small amount of state support for this program is leveraged to pull down significant federal and private funding. The program uses this funding to support approximately 30 applied research projects on Lake Erie each year.

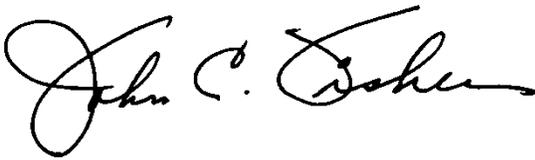
Similarly, OFBF is concerned about the elimination of funding for the National Center of Water Quality Research (NCWQR) at Heidelberg University. The water quality lab at Heidelberg is a leader in surface and ground water research and monitoring in the Great Lakes region and beyond. Farm Bureau has been proactive in working with our members to promote practices that mitigate the impact farming has on water quality. However, eliminating funding for the research we rely on to fully understand the issue, doesn't align with the emphasis that has been placed on finding solutions to these challenges.

We appreciate the fact that the Department of Agriculture has been allocated additional GRF funding to help fulfill its new responsibilities for animal care programs such as the dangerous and restricted animal

program and the high volume dog breeder program. However, Farm Bureau also has an interest in ensuring the department has all the resources it needs to carry out its core mission. We urge continued review of the department's resources to make certain ODA can continue to ensure a safe, affordable and abundant food supply for Ohioans.

The programs Farm Bureau is supporting in the budget bill have a real impact on all Ohioans. They help make Ohio's farms and businesses more profitable and efficient, train our future workforce and provide the research we need to protect our vital natural resources. By supporting these programs in the state budget bill you will help strengthen not just Ohio agriculture, but our state as a whole. Thank you for your consideration of these items as you continue your work on the state budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "F".

John C. Fisher
Executive Vice President

CC: Stephen F. Hirsch, OFBF President
OFBF Board of Trustees