



March 21, 2018

Governor John Kasich
77 S. High Street
Columbus, OH 43215



Dear Governor Kasich:

The agriculture community would like to update you on our work to improve water quality in Ohio and share our perspective on the importance of the next steps to be taken. As you know, we have been working collaboratively with many stakeholders to ensure our industry is at the forefront of offering workable, innovative and science-based solutions on this issue.



After millions of our own dollars invested and years of research, our partners in the research community are formulating early recommendations, based on their collection and analysis of data, as to what practices will help farmers reduce phosphorus loss. As these findings are disseminated, we are focusing on utilizing our collective resources to help our members take action accordingly.



As part of this effort, we have collectively initiated a new program to help farmers utilize soil testing and write nutrient management plans (NMPs) for their farms. We are partnering with Ohio's Certified Crop Advisors, the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Ohio State University Extension. These organizations will help us host a series of workshops in which soil testing will be utilized and NMPs will be written using a tool developed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture.



Of course, this is just the latest in a series of steps we have taken to help producers take action as a part of the water quality effort. We have enclosed for you, several other examples of this work.



As we continue to facilitate proactive steps by farmers, we are cognizant that your administration continues to examine options for additional regulation. We appreciated the opportunity to meet recently with leaders from ODA, OEPA and ODNR to share our perspective. However, after numerous meetings over several months, we have received little feedback as to the direction the administration plans to take based on those discussions. To be clear, we firmly believe it is extremely important for discussions such as this to include policymakers from the administration, the legislature and stakeholders.



As you know, we supported new mandatory requirements put in place under your leadership. However, any discussion of further regulation should be had with an understanding of the extensive mandatory and voluntary actions that are already taking place. A recent study by George Mason University listed food manufacturing, animal production and aquaculture, and crop production as the respectively second, third and sixth most regulated industries by the state of Ohio. Collectively, this would overwhelmingly make agriculture the most regulated industry in Ohio.



Arbitrary nutrient application bans, more paperwork, red tape and confusing mandates will not solve this problem. We must focus efforts on actions directly tied to what the science tells us is effective, which is exactly the approach we are taking when providing guidance to our members. In addition, we must make sure that our farms are being treated fairly as compared to other potential contributors to Ohio's water quality issues.



Governor Kasich, the status of the current agricultural economy is tenuous at best. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is predicting 2018 will see the lowest net farm income level in nominal dollar terms since 2006. We would expect the administration to abide by the principles it set forth under its own Common Sense Initiative when crafting any new regulations to ensure that improving water quality and supporting a viable agriculture industry can be mutually attainable.

We will continue to lead our members down a path that consists of utilizing research and data to inform innovative decision-making and farm management practices. These practices must allow farmers to both be part of the solution to improving water quality while remaining a viable industry that provides affordable and wholesome food to consumers.

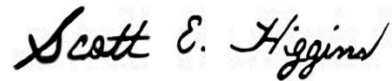
Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you on these important issues.



Elizabeth Harsh
Ohio Cattlemen's Association



Tadd Nicholson
Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Assn



Scott Higgins
Ohio Dairy Producers Association



Adam Sharp
Ohio Farm Bureau Federation



Bryan Humphreys
Ohio Pork Producers



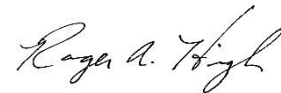
Jim Chakeres
Ohio Poultry Association



Kirk Merritt
Ohio Soybean Association



Christopher Henney
Ohio AgriBusiness Association



Roger High
Ohio Sheep Improvement Assn.

Cc: Ohio House of Representatives
Ohio Senate
Director Craig Butler
Director David Daniels
Director James Zehringer
Beth Hansen, Chief of Staff, Governor Kasich's Office
Wayne Struble, Policy Director, Governor Kasich's Office