



Testimony

Joint Hearings

House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee
&
Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

On

Agriculture Partial Budget Funding

March 15, 2016

Offered by
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Agriculture is the foundation of this Commonwealth and plays a role in every constituent's daily life. We know this is an important topic to you and every member of the General Assembly.

PennAg believes that this legislature and our Secretary of Agriculture understand that agriculture is important and are working every day to support funding for its related programs. The Governor believes that Pennsylvania has a revenue problem and presented a plan he would like to see move forward. The legislature has voted on multiple plans that they believe address the needs of Pennsylvania's citizens. The disagreement is clear and there are hard choices to be made.

We are concerned that agriculture is being used as a bartering tool to gain leverage for additional sources of revenue. Under no circumstance do we think this is appropriate. Not only is it unfair to the beneficiaries of these programs, it is unfair to the people who deliver these services.

The protection of the health of our livestock and poultry industry is our number one priority. Therefore, funding for the Animal Health and Diagnostic Commission, the PA Veterinary Lab, and our partners at Penn State and the University of Pennsylvania's New Bolton Center are of utmost

importance. Last year, we feared and prepared for an outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, or HPAI. The lack of funding for animal health has been challenging, but it is fair to say that because of the leadership and direction demonstrated by the bipartisan efforts of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees and their chambers' leadership, Secretary Redding and State Veterinarian Dr. Craig Shultz, Pennsylvania is unparalleled in the organization and readiness planning for an outbreak. The labs as well as the industry have an action plan that has been tested and retested in the event Pennsylvania is hit with HPAI.

This is not to suggest that animal health funding is not needed. Completion of last year's budget to ensure funding for all of the agriculture line items is vital.

Pennsylvania's ability to be a leader in agriculture can only be accomplished with the strong support of our partners. The University of Pennsylvania and Penn State have made Pennsylvania a national leader in agriculture, in terms of research, diagnostics and education. We appreciate the support from the General Assembly, and look forward to resolution to this difficult budget situation.