

# Comment Report

HF 389

A bill for an act establishing an agriculture education grant program within the department of education and making appropriations.(See HF 559.)

Subcommittee Members: Ingels-CH, Ehlert, Sieck

Date: 02/28/2023

Time: 08:00 AM

Location: RM 304.1

**Name:** Craig McEnany

**Comment:** Attached you will find my document in support of HF 389. If you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

**Support for HF 389** - A bill for an act establishing an agriculture education grant program within the department of education and making appropriations.

"Agriculture is as old as civilization and as new as space exploration!" Today that statement which I incorporated into my FFA Extemporaneous Speech as part of the 1973 state competition would take on a new meaning. It would be adjusted to include one of the many changes that are current impacting the agricultural industry.

As a high school student, I benefitted from the experiences that were provided to me during the school year. However, it was during those after school hour activities and summer experiences where I had the opportunity to grow as an individual and make the connection that provided me with a greater understanding of the world outside my community.

My agricultural teachers were provided extended summer contracts that allowed them to work with students that today would be referred to as experiential learnings experiences.

Early in my own teaching career as an agricultural teacher/FFA advisor, I benefitted from the extended summer contracts that allowed me to maintain contact with my students. I was able to develop and incorporate a variety of learning experiences that would engage my students during a time that was generally defined as off contract.

Since that time, there has been a gradual erosion of the ability by many local school districts to maintain and provide continued support for summer contracts in agricultural education. It started in 1980's when the farm crisis created financial angst for local school districts trying to balance their budgets, the shifting of resources that had been provided through a variety of programs and a lack of understanding for agricultural education beyond the established school calendar year as the shift from rural to urban dynamics took place.

Hopefully, we have advanced to a level of understanding that learning takes place in agriculture every day and is not confined to just the 180-day calendar year. Student who are encouraged and can participate in this learning experience have a greater understanding of the unique opportunities, the demands and skill sets required to become employees in an ever-changing industry.

I strongly encouraged this committee to support HR 389 and move it forward for consideration as an active piece of legislation.

**Name:** Eric Smith

**Comment:** Attached is my encouragement that the committee to support HF 389 and move it forward for consideration as an active piece of legislation. Additionally, I share an example of the positive impact the education grant will have on schools that add an agricultural education program.

Representatives Ingels, Ehlert, and Sleck,

Thank you for serving on the House subcommittee reviewing House File 389 to establish a grant program for costs of school agricultural education teachers. I encourage the committee to support HF 389 and move it forward for consideration as an active piece of legislation.

I am Eric Smith of Independence, Iowa. I was a member of the local school board when agricultural education returned to the high school in Fall 2013. Part of that decision was determining if additional instruction outside of the teacher's 180-day contract would be included in the agricultural education program.

The agricultural industry is an Iowa strength. Many local school districts have added agricultural education programs to respond to the need for more workers. I applaud that you are considering ways to support those schools.

This grant program will help schools add agricultural education to their Career and Technology Education programs while employing an instructor with an extended-days contract.

When my school district added the agricultural education program, the teacher contract for more than 180 days was criticized by the existing staff. To address the concern, the teacher's salary, inclusive of nearly sixty days of additional instruction, was offset by contributions from the school district's foundation for several years. Local supporters of the new program would seek donations throughout the year to ensure that the instructor's contract would remain with those additional days of instruction the following year. Today, the full salary is covered by the general education funds of the school district. The supporters are able to donate to specific program needs, such as new greenhouse equipment. If this grant program was in place in 2013, the school would demonstrated that the additional instruction costs would not be coming from the general education fund, but from completely independent funds.

I ask that you support HF 389 to move forward as an active piece of legislation. This grant will help school districts avoid some of the stress encountered by my school when we brought in the agricultural education program.

Eric B. Smith