Sunset Review Committee
Ohio Grape industries Council
October 29, 2019

Good afternoon, Chairman Vitale, Vice-Chair Roegner and members of the Sunset Review Committee. My name is Christy Eckstein and I am Executive Director of the Ohio Grape Industries Committee at the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on behalf of the Ohio Grape Industries Committee. The Department of Agriculture is respectfully asking for re-authorization for this committee.

The Ohio Grape Industries Committee (OGIC) was created by the General Assembly in 1981 with the purpose of promoting and marketing Ohio’s grape and wine producing industry. The committee is a non-regulatory advisory board mandated to create viable, income-producing grape enterprises in the state of Ohio. It accomplishes this mandate by providing marketing and promotion efforts to generate and expand markets for grapes and grape products and by contracting for extension and research to improve both the quality of grape products and the profitability of grape growing as an agri-business. There are currently 1,500 acres of vineyards and 320 licensed wine manufacturers in the state, which is nearly a seventy-five percent increase in the last five years.

The Ohio Grape Industries Committee operates to provide Ohio’s grape and wine industry with marketing, extension and research programs that will help to increase production and sales of Ohio grape and grape products including wine, thus creating viable, income-producing grape enterprises and creating more jobs for Ohio’s economy. The OGIC is funded through a five-cent per gallon excise tax on wine, sparkling wine, and champagne to fund its marketing and research initiatives. More than 1.3 million consumers visit Ohio wineries per year and programs such as these, help keep Ohio wines in the forefront of the travel and tourism industry in Ohio. The industry provides more than $1.3 billion in economic impact annually, as well as provides more than 8,000 full-time jobs for the state. The Committee also invests heavily in research to help advance Ohio’s grape and wine industry in the areas of viticulture (grape growing), enology (winemaking), plant pathology, and entomology. As the industry continues to grow, this research is very valuable to Ohio producers for them to produce high-quality, high-value wine grapes and wines.

The Committee has one full-time employee, an Executive Director. On a per meeting basis, the executive Director spends approximately eight to ten hours preparing and working the OGIC meetings.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding Ohio Grape Industries Committee.