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Lobbying Report

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### OSU-544 “Honey Can Never Be Organic”

I am in strong proponency of this bill because it keeps honesty when labeling, and it helps to protect the consumers and customers with false labeling. I had the opportunity to speak with the author of this bill, which is HB OSU-544, which refers to Organic Bee Products. Author, Andrew Schultz, had a lot to say in proponency for his bill. The following paragraph is his statement, “The following Consumers across the United States pay a hefty premium for organic products. Investing in organic comes with the presumption of the purity of the product to various sprays, pesticides, and chemical fertilizers. As the current National Organic Program states, bees must fall under the same guidelines as livestock around the nation. USDA gives the NOP the oversight of what rules shall be granted to establish organic regulations. Bees simply cannot fall under the same guidelines as livestock and retain a wholistic assurance of purity at a mass scale and inspection. Bees have the ability to forage up to 5 miles radius from their hives. A standard field is less than a square mile. Given a beehive is placed in the center of a field, there is no assurance where bees cannot fly to other non-organic fields. The bill aims to establish transparency between producers and consumers in the state of Oklahoma and put producers on a level playing field.” (Schultz OSU)

I was also able to talk with someone who had a strong opponency to this bill. I spoke with Representative Kailee Macy (OSU) and this is what she had to say about this House Bill, “Organic honey is a thing that the USDA defines organic as. You can have bees in a place that is not exposed to anything unorganic to make it organic. Bees only fly one to two and up to five miles from their hive, so you just put the bees in an environment with the standards that meet it to be organic. This would make what the whole bill is trying to say wrong because organic honey per the standard of organic is very possible to be made. Organic bee products is a very real thing and deserve to have a definition and label to be sold as so. The basis of the proponency argument is that there are no places in Oklahoma that meet these standards with hives that would be able to afford the USDA certification to be organic. He has no basis behind this because he does not know for certain it is unaffordable, and someone could easily start up an organic bee farm to make bee products that meet the USDA standards of organic.” (Macy OSU)

I followed up with Representative Schultz again and this was his rebuttal to the opponency argument, “The argument by the opponency stating if a field/hive can achieve organic purity, the proponent argument is null, and void is simply false. The exact point of the bill is the emphasis of organic programs and its efforts to make all products naturally pure. The case is not that there can be no organic fields; it is that you cannot ensure *all* fields are entirely organic, and that, in fact, a small minority can fit purity in the sense.”