



Joint Committee on Property Tax Review and Reform

Matt Aultman

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Chairman Blessing, Chairman Roemer, and other members of the Joint Committee on Property Tax Review and Reform, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Matt Aultman, and I am a farmer from Darke County, where my family and I raise corn, soybeans, wheat, hay, and produce. I have the pleasure of serving on the Ohio Farm Bureau's Board of Trustees, representing Darke, Miami, Clark, and Champaign counties. I am also a small business owner and serve as a county commissioner for Darke County. With farm incomes projected to drop 25% this year, the issue of property taxation remains as one of the biggest challenges our members face today.

Farming is one of the only industries where the majority of our farmers have to be price takers, instead of price setters. We have to take the price the market is willing to give, and in an increasingly global and volatile market, having predictability in any part of the operation is paramount. The property tax bill always comes due, whether we face floods, droughts or any other unpredictable events, and the volatility in the current system is frankly leaving many farmers struggling to turn profits year in and year out. Finding a way to limit volatility in our property tax system must be accomplished so that we are not only not taxing residents out of their homes, but so that the backbone of Ohio's economy - agriculture- can continue to survive.

CAUV should not be only viewed as a tax saving tool for our members, it must also be seen as a farmland preservation tool. This program allows me to remain profitable and implement new practices on my operation that keep me competitive. Many critics of CAUV cite it as a "barrier to development". Whether that be energy, housing or other forms of development, I can tell you CAUV is not a barrier to these whatsoever. Ohio has lost nearly 300,000 acres of farmland in the last 5 years, and more than likely none of those will ever come back. Ohio agriculture creates food security, and food security is national security. Setting state policy that balances our state's growth with our agricultural heritage is the best option for Ohio's future.

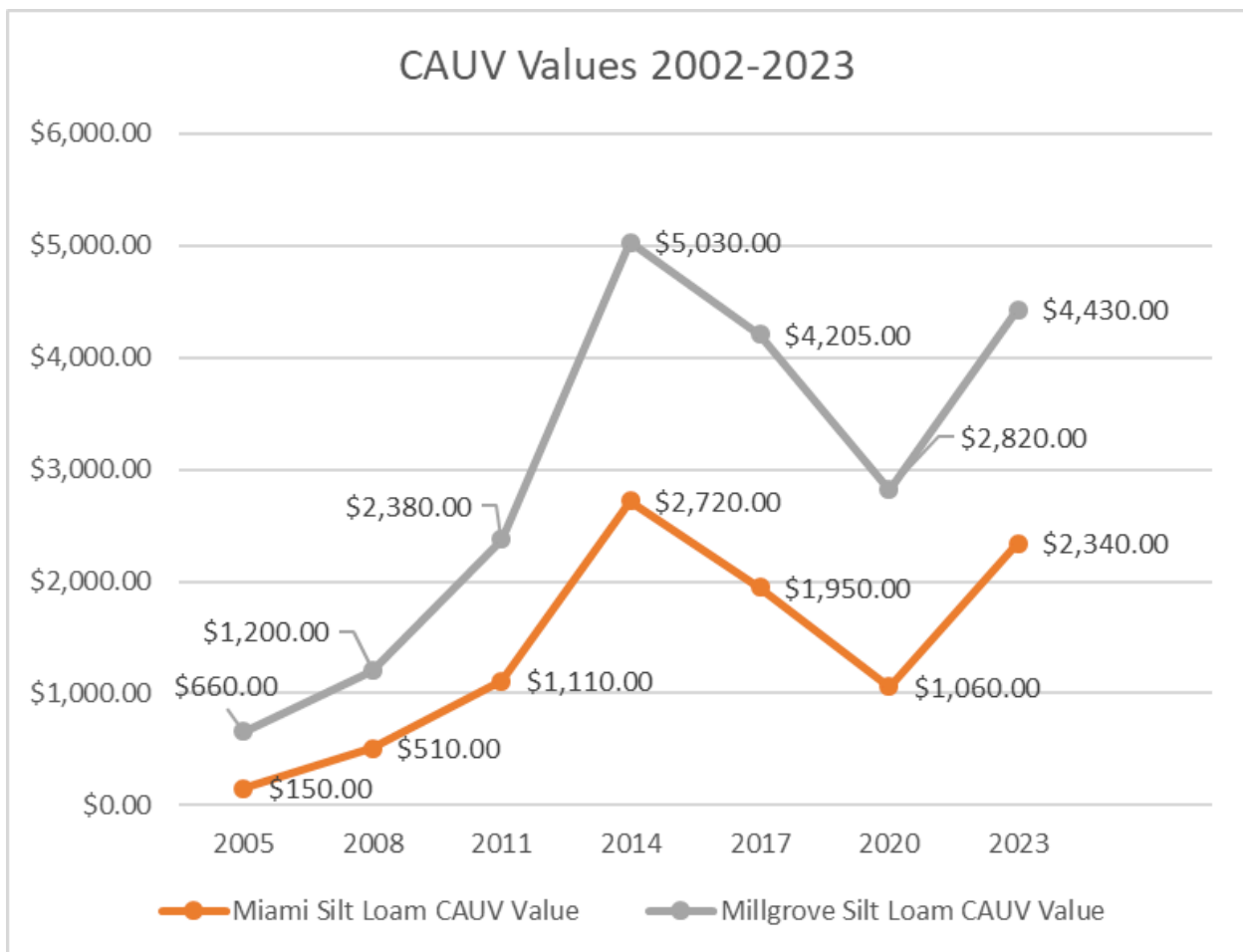
As a county commissioner, I understand the housing challenges facing this state. But, changes to housing policy will likely have little to no impact on the volatility and increases in taxes that CAUV taxpayers experience. Additionally, keep in mind that agricultural land uses less services than other types of property, does not send children to school, and therefore represents a net tax gain even with CAUV valuations.

This committee has heard testimony that characterized this reevaluation cycle as an "outlier," meaning the increases many saw were unusual and the system would possibly correct itself moving forward. This may be true in the case of residential property, but CAUV property is no stranger to these valuation spikes. 2023's reevaluation in Darke County saw a 94% increase in average CAUV values, and unfortunately, this is nothing new. In the graph I have attached with

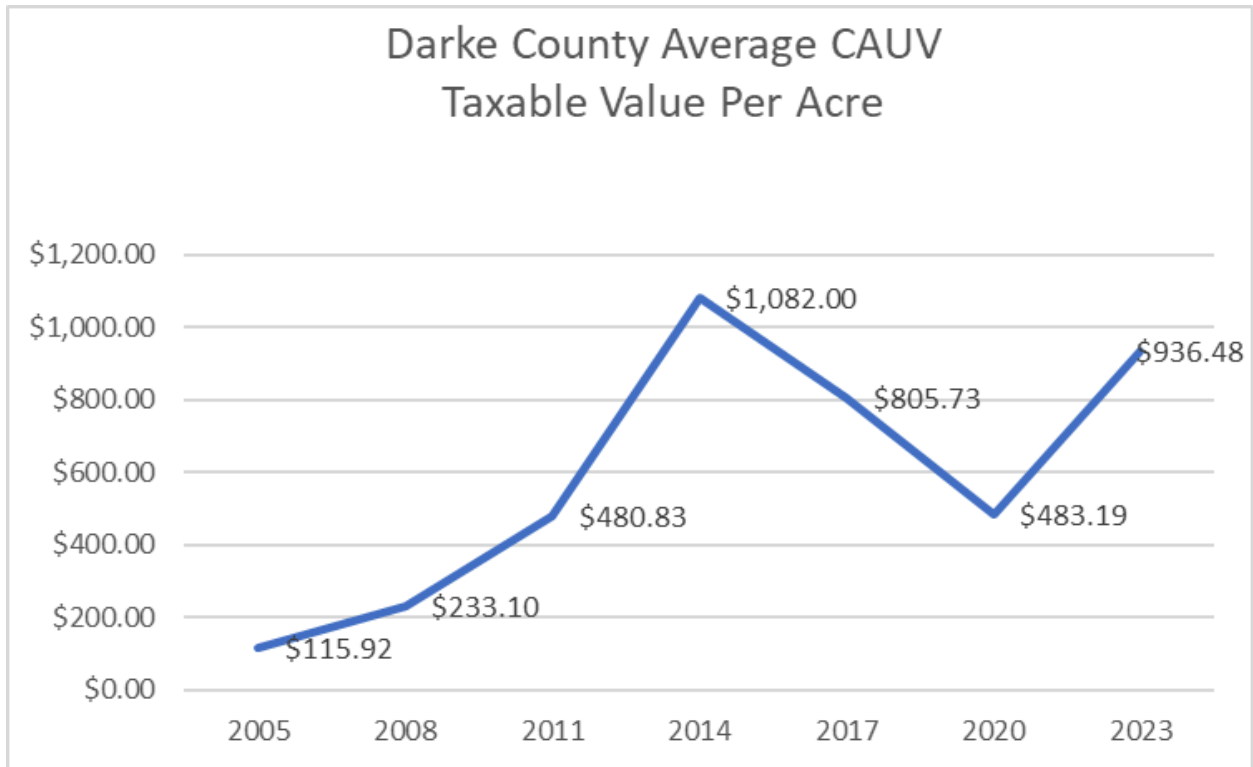


my testimony you can see that in the last seven revaluations, going back nearly 20 years, our average CAUV values increased more than 100% five times. This is an unsustainable trend that has made it very difficult for farms of all sizes to remain profitable.

Ensuring that agricultural property is valued for its agricultural potential and not development is critical to the continued success of Ohio agriculture. Reducing the volatility for all property owners will help our state continue to prosper. I know this is a complicated issue, but it cannot be ignored if we want Ohio to continue to flourish. The Ohio Farm Bureau and I appreciate the many hours this committee has spent studying this issue, and we remain committed to helping the General Assembly craft a plan that benefits all Ohioans. I thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments today, and would be happy to answer any questions at this time.



*These represent full CAUV values as calculated for the soils in the listed tax year.



*These data points represent average taxable CAUV value per acre in Darke County