



Honorable Members of the House Energy and Natural Resource Committee:

I am testifying today in support of Senate Bill 257 and asking for you to allow the Ohio Department of Natural Resource to be able to take their licensing process to the level that other states have already climbed to. Ohio is a state that has some of the best walleye and smallmouth bass fishing in the nation. The whitetail deer hunting in Ohio in terms of trophy status is in the Top 5 in the nation. However, the license fees charged to non-resident sportsmen do not reflect this. Of the five neighboring states, two have lower non-resident fees for anglers fishing with Michigan being the highest at \$76.00. Ohio has trophy class walleye and smallmouth bass fishing at Lake Erie and the number of out of state license plates there in April and May prove that. With regards to hunting license fees all but Kentucky are lower. Kentucky is the same as ours. But this is just for the basic hunting license. When you start adding deer permits to the license all the neighboring states are higher. I have encountered hunters from all over the nation who come to Ohio to deer hunt due to the quality of our animals and some pay outfitters up to \$2000 a week just to hunt.

I have been blessed to have hunted and fished in over 30 states and two foreign countries. When I first started purchasing out of state licenses I was amazed that some states offered multi-year and lifetime license packages to their residents. I often wondered why did Ohio not do this. In July, 2017, I was asked to meet with Chief Mike Miller and other executives of the ODNR in Columbus. I was asked what I thought about raising certain non-resident license fees and multi-year/lifetime licenses. The first words out of my mouth was "It's about time".

Passage of Senate Bill 257 is important also in keeping the youth of Ohio and this nation interested in fishing and hunting. It is a heritage that used to be passed on from generation to generation. Now it is in rapid decline. My own organization has shown an increase in the average age of members. Most are bald and have gray hair. Ohio is trying to keep the youth and older people interested in fishing and hunting and this bill will take them one step closer to their goals.

In closing I ask you to pass this bill from committee to allow the House to vote on them. Ohio is behind the times in regard to licensing the sportsmen of this state and country. The Ohio residents who are purchasing licenses to fish and hunt will benefit from the structuring of the multi-year and lifetime license. Thank you

Stephen Coulter
President, Ohio Bass Federation