



Ohio Environmental Council

[Action Fund]

**House Bill 529
Proponent Testimony
Sarah Spence, Director of Government Affairs
House Finance Committee
March 6, 2018**

Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee, I am Sarah Spence, Director of Government Affairs for the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on HB 529, the capital appropriations bill.

On behalf of the OEC Action Fund and our members, I want to say thank you for the meaningful investments made to Ohio's local and state parks, preservation programs and natural resources. Ohio currently ranks near last in the country in the amount of public land space per capita so these investments into maintaining current and purchasing new public lands for recreational and conservation purposes will allow Ohioans more opportunity to enjoy our outdoor spaces. These projects include the Columbus & Franklin County Metro Parks' Quarry trails project, The Ohio to Erie Trail land acquisition project and the Hocking Hills scenic trail project.

We'd also like to thank the General Assembly for its support for the following:

- **Healthy Lake Erie Fund** - The value of this \$10 million investment to help address nutrient discharges and improve water quality in our Great Lake cannot be overstated. Lake Erie supports an annual tourism economy of roughly \$12 billion and many local communities depend on it for their livelihoods. This investment will continue our state's commitment to a healthy lake for all Ohioans to enjoy.
- **Clean Ohio Fund** - The \$100 million over the biennium to the Clean Ohio Fund will continue to support this widely used program. The grants supported by this investment will help protect green space, preserve farmland and construct multi-use trails. All 88 counties have benefited from the program.
- **Grand River Conservation Campus in Ashtabula County** - The \$385,000 appropriation to The Nature Conservancy's Grand River Conservation Campus in Ashtabula County will provide structural improvements to ensure adequate safety and access for students from local middle schools who are using the campus and the newly opened nature center there. The funds will also allow for the develop of a field research station for visiting students from Lake Erie College in Painesville.

The Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund greatly appreciates the time and effort that the Administration and General Assembly has put into crafting this capital bill. These investments will benefit all of us, no matter if you live, work or recreate this beautiful state.