



Sponsor Testimony

State Representative Haraz N. Ghanbari and State Representative John Patterson

House Bill 7

Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to stand before you today to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 7. House Bill 7 builds upon the foundation that Governor Mike DeWine established by authoring the H2Ohio initiative. All of us in this room today recognize that Ohio is blessed to have some of the most famous and beautiful bodies of water in the country. We also understand the fact that over the last several decades the quality of these waterways have deteriorated. It is our responsibility to protect and preserve Ohio's water quality in its many lakes and rivers for our future generation to enjoy.

The legislation before you today seeks to establish a permanent trust called the H2Ohio Endowment Board, to ensure that we can continually fund efforts to protect and preserve our precious natural resources. By utilizing the prudent person model in which OPERS funds are invested, the Treasurer of State will invest the funds within the trust. The fund is in the custody of the Treasurer of State, but would be outside of the state treasury.

The H2Ohio Endowment Board may accept donations, land, title to land, and federal money. The board may be able to receive general revenue surplus to be transferred to the fund, issue special obligation securities in order to fund projects approved by the H2Ohio Advisory Council, and establish or augment existing endowment. If so determined, the board may make funding available to projects recommended by the H2Ohio Advisory Council on an annual basis.

The composition of the H2Ohio Endowment Board will consist of 12 appointees:

- Six members appointed by the Governor, three will serve a term of 10 years, one will serve a term of seven years, one will serve a term of five, and the last will serve a term of 3 years.
- Three members appointed by The Speaker of the House, one will serve a term of seven years, one will serve a term of five, and the last will serve a term of 3 years.
- Three members appointed by President of the Senate, one will serve a term of seven years, one will serve a term of five, and the last will serve a term of 3 years.

The 18-member advisory council is designed to bring together a wide range of interests and perspective from around the state, part of the checks and balances we've built into our H2Ohio proposal. In addition to the directors of the departments of agriculture, EPA and natural resources, the advisory board would include 10 members appointed by the governor which, under the bill, would represent the perspectives of counties, townships, municipalities, public health, business or tourism, and agricultural and environmental interests, and be from geographically diverse areas of Ohio. The Speaker of the House and Senate President would each have two appointments to the board

Ohio House of Representatives



The establishment of the H2Ohio Endowment Board ensures that this great state has an efficient, secure, and stable mechanism that will enable our communities, large and small, to invest in preservation and restoration of their lakes and waterways. Now is the time for action to protect our greatest natural resource.

Thank you for your time today, and we stand before you ready and willing to answer any questions this committee has.