



House Finance Committee

HB 7

5/29/2019

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee, my name is Joseph Pheil and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Rural Water Association (ORWA). Thank you for allowing me to provide written comments in support of HB 7.

Since 1976 ORWA has provided on-site technical assistance to rural communities with water and wastewater systems throughout Ohio. Today, we continue to expand our membership and the base of benefits we provide to our members. Our system members provide water and/or wastewater services to approximately 2.01 million Ohioans.

ORWA would like to thank this body and the DeWine Administration for their commitment to improving water quality in Ohio. The proposed H2Ohio program is a great first step to addressing the needs this state faces in protecting Ohio's greatest resource, its water. Adequately funding the H2Ohio program will be key to its future success, and we applaud the House for its innovative approach in HB 7. Allowing the H2Ohio Endowment Board to accept contributions and issue special obligation securities to fund water resource projects will help ensure a dedicated funding source is available long into the future.

ORWA takes great pride in the investments we have made in underserved, rural communities. A few of our programs/services include:

- Providing technical assistance including preventative maintenance and training on proper operating procedures.
- Smoke testing sewer systems to identify and reduce infiltration and inflow that could lead to system overflows going into water ways.
- Establishing source water protection plans that help communities understand the threats and how to best protect their water supply.

- Provide energy efficiency assessments that help reduce operating costs and improve financial stability.
- Offer training on changes and updates to regulations and compliance requirements.

Despite our best efforts, additional funding is needed for systems to make necessary improvements. The H2Ohio initiative, along with the funding mechanism in HB 7, will be a significant step towards addressing these needs.

I would like to thank Representatives Ghanbari and Patterson for their work on HB 7 as well as for the entire House of Representatives for their commitment to improving water quality in Ohio. Please view ORWA as a resource to addressing these challenges moving forward.

Sincerely,

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