



# DEFIANCE

*a great place to live*

City of Defiance | Water Pollution Control

Mark Lehnert, Superintendent

June 17, 2019

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee, my name is Mark Lehnert and I am the Superintendent of the Defiance Ohio Wastewater Treatment Plant. Thank you for allowing me to stand here today in support of HB 7.

As an official of the City of Defiance it was very refreshing to read the proposed HB 7 and understand that it is a nonpartisan bill that addresses the financial needs for our greatest resource, our lakes, streams, and rivers. I have spent over 35 years in the wastewater field and one of the most difficult issues facing the future of clean water is how to fund all the needs that we face today. There are infrastructure needs, water quality issues, urban and non-urban storm water runoff, public sewer and private septic systems all requiring attention. We cannot address all these issues without some funding relief, and it appears that HB 7 is the right avenue for funding our water development projects.

The City of Defiance is located in Northwest Ohio and has a population of approximately 16,000 people. To date, the City has spent over 30 million dollars in correcting our infrastructure to prevent pollution from getting into the Maumee and Auglaize Rivers. Some of the funding for these projects has come from grants, low interest loans and bonds. Residents of Defiance and adjacent unincorporated areas are paying for these infrastructure upgrades through higher water and sewer bills.

The Defiance Water Treatment Plant draws its raw water from the Maumee River and sends it to a reservoir. The water is pulled from the reservoir and sent to the treatment plant for processing before it is sent out to the homes, business and schools. Since our water source is the Maumee River it is not unusual for us to exceed the Trihalomethane (TTHM) levels at least once per year. TTHM is a byproduct of organics that carry through the treatment system. The City of Defiance is currently working on a Granulated Activated Carbon system to reduce the TTHMs. This project has the potential to cost the City in excess of 20 million dollars. Again, this cost will be put onto the water customers who are already paying high water and sewer bills by anyone's standards.

If improvements are made to the Maumee River upstream of the Defiance Water Plant then the cost for treating our water could potentially go down. I feel the only way the quality of the Maumee River is going to improve is through a joint effort between the farmers, landowners, municipalities, governmental regulators, universities and lawmakers, such as yourselves.

We cannot afford to neglect our water resources here in Ohio. We have the largest watersheds of any of the Great lakes with the Maumee River. The Maumee River watershed extends to three states,

Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. Eighty-five percent of the Maumee River watershed passes through Defiance Ohio and then travels eastward into the Maumee Bay in Toledo.

One of the more frustrating issues we face is who is to blame for our poor water quality? I believe we all can point the finger at ourselves. Is it the municipalities discharging wastewater to the water ways; is it the farmers who need to put fertilizer on the fields to produce yields for there crops; is it the runoff from the bridges, roads and parking lots? It does us no good to point blame at any one entity and the only way to correct the problems are to work together.

My understanding of HB 7 is that it is a funding mechanism for all groups to clean up the water ways of the state of Ohio. This funding source will do more than just give us a new mechanism for funding opportunities but help unite the different communities together. I have been in meetings where farmers are pointing at municipalities and municipalities are pointing at the farmers. With HB 7 the funding mechanism will help both parties which I believe will prove to be a more cooperative effort between the two and put animosity aside for a working relationship to solve the problems we face with our water.

Nature has a way of telling us we need to do more. We can look at the water crisis the City of Toledo had several years back due to harmful algal blooms on Lake Erie. Grand Lake Saint Mary's had a major problem some years ago that took a toll on its tourism trade. We cannot afford to lose our lakes, rivers and streams.

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.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Lehnert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Mark Lehnert, Superintendent  
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