



Protecting nature. Preserving life.

The Nature Conservancy in Ohio
6375 Riverside Drive, Suite 100
Dublin, OH 43017

Tel (614) 717-2770
Fax (614) 717-2777
nature.org/ohio

**Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Proponent Testimony
House Bill 59**

*Tracy Freeman, Director of Government Relations
The Nature Conservancy in Ohio
May 22, 2019*

Good afternoon Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Schaffer and Ranking Member O'Brien. I am here today on behalf of The Nature Conservancy in Ohio to ask for your Yes vote on House Bill 59 sponsored by Representative Wiggam. The legislation will designate the month of April as 'Ohio Native Plant Month' to increase public awareness of Ohio's native plants and the many benefits they provide to pollinators, Ohio's economy, and the health of Ohio's environment.

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization with chapters in all 50 states and projects in over 70 countries. We are a non-partisan, science-based organization that seeks to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We work collaboratively with businesses, farmers, sportsmen groups, government and local communities to develop pragmatic solutions to conservation challenges, including land conservation, water quality, and air pollution. More than 65,000 Ohioans are Nature Conservancy supporters and we own and manage over 20,000 acres of nature preserves throughout the state. We invite any of you to visit our open preserves and enjoy the unique places that make Ohio a great place to live, work and play.

Highlighting the importance of our native plants couldn't be timelier. The numbers are striking. Of the approximately 3,000 plant species known to occur in the wild in Ohio, about 25 percent are non-native and upwards of 100 of those are considered invasive. These invasive species not only impact our forests, wetlands and streams, but also our economy, health and safety. Invasive plants and insects can kill the trees that shade our homes and that our kids play hide-and-seek around. They increase the presence of other disease-spreading species like ticks. They diminish visibility along trails where safety is important and they all require significant resources devoted to eliminating or preventing them.

Passage of HB 59 bill is an important step in the growing nationwide effort to help native ecosystems, protect against harmful invasive species and protect and our declining pollinators. Native plants are good for Ohio, good for the environment, and good for business. Please make Ohio one of the first states in the nation to officially recognize the importance of native plants. Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill and we hope you will support HB 59.