



Ohio Senate
1st District

Cliff Hite

State Senator

Senate Building Room 142
Columbus, Ohio 43215
614.466.8150

Committees:

Agriculture – Chair
Education Finance Subcommittee – Chair
Education – Vice Chair
Joint Education Oversight Committee – Chair
Energy & Natural Resources
Health & Human Services
Public Utilities
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Correctional Institution Inspection Committee
Legislative Service Commission

Senate Bill 2 Sponsor Testimony
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
February 2, 2017

Chairman Balderson, Vice-Chair Jordan, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 2, which makes changes and improvements to Ohio's environmental laws.

Although Senate Bill 2 covers a broad range of environmental issues and will proactively work to protect the environment and improve the water quality in Ohio, my testimony will focus on its most important issue – Lake Erie – our natural treasure that provides us with fresh surface water and is a vital economic asset for Ohio.

Twenty-three communities and 2.2 million Ohioans rely on Lake Erie for drinking water. Lake Erie is an economic engine that drives Ohio – its environmental resources create jobs, stimulate economic development and strengthen our waterfront communities in Ohio's northern counties. With anglers, boaters and tourists spending \$14.1 billion in annual tourism sales in Ohio alone, sustaining its environmental health while maintaining a healthy fish and wildlife population is always a top priority.

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission and its staff advise Governor Kasich and the Ohio General Assembly on the development, implementation, and coordination of Lake Erie programs and policies. In addition, it represents Ohio's interests in regional, national and international forums pertaining to the resources of the Great Lakes. The Commission also is responsible to assist in the implementation of the Coastal Zone Management Program and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and facilitates compliance with the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and the Great Lakes Toxic Substances Control Agreement. Finally, the Commission is responsible for managing the distribution of money from the Lake Erie Protection Fund.

Senate Bill 2 will update existing statutes to ensure and define the responsibilities of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC). The role of the Commission is to preserve Lake Erie's natural resources and to protect the quality of its waters and ecosystem. The Commission is also responsible for promoting the economic development of the Lake Erie region by ensuring the coordination of policies and programs of state government pertaining to the lake's water quality, toxic substances, and coastal resource management.

My team, along with Ohio EPA staff, convened interested party meetings last summer, focusing on issues related to the Lake Erie Commission and dredged material, solid waste, and surface



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water. In addition, Ohio EPA staff held numerous meetings throughout last summer and fall to engage stakeholders and encourage support of this important piece of legislation. The provisions in Senate Bill 2 will help protect the environment and improve the water quality in Ohio. It will also help maintain and strengthen our national treasure – Lake Erie.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 2 and thank you again for the opportunity to testify. At this time, with the Chairman's permission, I will allow Director Craig Butler, of the Ohio EPA to present proponent testimony and a more detailed overview of the bill before entertaining questions on Senate Bill 2.