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Senator Sean J. O'Brien
Ohio Senate
32nd District

Sponsor Testimony: Senate Bill (SB) 299
Senate Finance Committee
May 15th, 2018

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to present sponsor testimony today on SB 299. This legislation, which is bipartisan in nature, would create the so-called "Clean Lake 2020 Plan", providing much needed financial resources dedicated toward cleaning up Lake Erie.

As one who represents a district with many miles of Lake Erie shoreline, and having spent countless hours enjoying the lake throughout my own life, reports regarding the lake's pollution and recent designation as "impaired" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have proved especially unsettling. These reports, along with numerous widely publicized news stories from the past few years regarding algal blooms in Lake Erie's western basin, made it clear to me that something needs to be done by this General Assembly to ensure our state's Great Lake continues to thrive for generations to come.

Because of this, I am happy to join Senator Gardner in sponsoring SB 299, which makes a number of changes to the Ohio Revised Code that, we feel, are necessary in the near term, and will greatly contribute to the overall health of Lake Erie in the long term.

Among other things, SB 299 would do the following:

- Direct \$2.65 million in capital funds to the Ohio State Sea Grant and Stone Lab for research space, lake monitoring equipment, and more.
- Allocate an additional \$10 million to support projects to reduce open lake disposal of dredged materials.
- Provide up to \$20 million for the Department of Agriculture, the Lake Erie Commission, and the Soil & Water Commission to create programs to reduce phosphorus levels in and around the lake.
- Boost Soil and Water Conservation District support by \$3.5 million for those in the lake's western basin.

We feel that the targeting and funding of these programs and resources are the most effective steps we can take toward improving the health and quality of Lake Erie. Furthermore, funds allocated under this bill are even more critical than usual, with all recent scientific lake health data showing that Ohio must take more steps to meet phosphorus reduction targets moving forward. Additionally, some of this funding could

eventually go to support farmers and conservation districts as they continue to adopt new approaches and technology in the near future, truly making this legislation a win-win-win for the state of Ohio.

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you again for allowing Senator Gardner and me to present SB 299 to you today. This bill would go far toward restoring and protecting Ohio's crown jewel of a resource, and I urge your favorable consideration of it. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.