



Lake Erie Foundation  
Matt Fisher, Vice President  
Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 2  
Ohio House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

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Chairman Vitale, Vice Chairman Kick, Ranking Member Denson and members of the Committee, I am Matt Fisher with the Lake Erie Foundation and I am here today as a proponent of Senate Bill 2. The Lake Erie Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization established in 2016 to serve as Lake Erie's advocate for economic sustainability, legal defense, education, outreach and innovative sustainable technology.

We respect Governor DeWine's leadership in launching the H2Ohio plan and now that the program is up and running, we wanted to build on the comments we made to this committee in December. H2Ohio is a good start but H2Ohio has couple significant gaps that Senate Bill 2 addresses and we support Senate Bill 2 in its current form. H2Ohio and Senate Bill 2 actually complement each other, and I'd like to point out two key areas where they work well to address state wide water quality improvement.

In the agriculture section of H2Ohio, the practices that are outlined are the correct practices. We are concerned that there is reimbursement for all farms that implement these practices as long as that practice is not being reimbursed on that farm by way of another program. These funds should be used for the fields in highest need and highest impairment not for farms with low risk of run off or farms that already implement that practice. We believe that after a year of rolling out a certification program, that it will be known where the impaired fields are located. Senate Bill 2 specifically calls out directing resources towards fields that are impaired. With limited resources, it seems counterintuitive to spread these financial resources over a wide geographic area to farms that are already implementing these management practices.

Another big concern we have is that there is no specific measurement of water quality that will help determine performance of these practices. In the next 2 years, if there is a large, dangerous algae bloom in the Western Basin of Lake Erie there is nothing that can be pointed to that gives the public or leadership confidence that this issue of algae blooms is figured out. This is where the pilot program can help. A sub-watershed pilot program is a big part of Senate Bill 2. The objective of a sub-watershed pilot project would be to work with all of the farms in a specific geographic watershed and implement phosphorus reducing practices in a high

percentage of farms in that watershed and then measure the impact of water quality downstream. The key aspects of the pilot program are as follows:

- 1) The farmers in the sub-watershed would implement these plans with 100% support.
- 2) After 2-4 years, it could be determined which practices are most effective by measuring impact of water quality downstream from the pilot fields.
- 3) With successful results there will be a wider support from farmers across the state.
- 4) After managing the pilot for a couple years we will be able to extrapolate how much it will cost to roll out an effective program throughout first north west Ohio , then throughout the entire state.

The sub-watersheds selected also all have a few years of history so that comparisons can be made to previous years. A team led by Ohio Department of Agriculture with team members from OSU and Heidelberg University selected several watersheds that are good cross sections of farms representing other watersheds in Ohio

With a sub-watershed project there would obviously be key on-farm learnings. But there are two major take-aways that we learn from a pilot project that will not have from H2Ohio. First, we will learn if these practices have a positive impact on reducing phosphorus to a point of improving water quality in Lake Erie. We all believe these practices are effective, but we will learn more definitively with a pilot program and will spend significantly fewer resources in a more targeted way that will be a more efficient use of valuable funds.

Most importantly, at the conclusion of the sub-watershed pilot program, there will be much more accurate estimates of the TOTAL COST when extrapolated to first Northwest Ohio, and then ultimately all of Ohio. All of Ohio will benefit from the learnings from this pilot watershed, and we will know how much it will cost to implement throughout the State.

We also believe that all fields should not add any fertilizer if their soil counts are above the agronomic rate which is approximately 50ppm. Director Pelanda recently added this provision back into a couple of the practices proposed by ODA. We applaud her leadership in addressing this sensitive point. This is an emotional issue, but one that needs to be resolved so that we can truly make progress in reducing phosphorus run off. There should be some type of plan – even if that plan has a 5,7, or 10 year ramp down to reach the agronomic rate. The Lake Erie Foundation is concerned that this wasn't adequately addressed in H2Ohio.

While H2OHIO certainly has good intentions and possibly some improvements, the focused pilot project would ultimately provide clearly defined protocols and structure, complemented by defined ROI measurements and input costs. It would be measured, accurate and provide desperately needed clarity to so many theories and outright speculation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this important issue and I'd be happy to answer any questions at this time.