



**Proponent Testimony of National Wildlife Federation  
SB 2 - H2Ohio Endowment Trust Fund  
Presented to the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee**

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Chairman Vitale, Vice Chair Kick, Ranking Member Denson, and Members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on SB 2. My name is Gail Hesse and I am the Great Lakes Water Program Director for the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), America's largest conservation organization. Prior to joining NWF, I spent a career with the State of Ohio working towards clean water. During my tenure with Ohio EPA and as director of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission, I chaired the Ohio Lake Erie Phosphorus Task Force, served on the binational work group that developed the phosphorus reduction targets for Lake Erie and administered programs that sought strategic solutions to our complex water quality issues in Ohio. I've continued this work with NWF and served as a coauthor on the science paper "Achieving Phosphorus Targets for Lake Erie" that identifies the obstacles we are facing in making progress as well as solutions for moving forward.

I am well familiar with the importance of watershed planning in delivering solutions at a scale that will have lasting impact. While at Ohio EPA I managed watershed management staff and we wrote *A Guide to Watershed Planning in Ohio* to assist watershed coordinators and participated in the review of these plans for joint endorsement by Ohio EPA and ODNR.

I am here today to reiterate my support for SB 2 and provisions that provide data privacy for information about individual farms and farm practices. We have been working with the sponsors of the bill and other stakeholders about amendments to SB 2 to ensure that information collected about individual farm conservation practices not be considered a public record. We need information about trends in the adoption of conservation practices, information that is critical to understanding progress towards water quality improvements. We can do this if we aggregate that data and we remove any potential obstacles for farmer participation in programs.

I am also here to underscore the need to target watersheds with critical, documented water quality needs. We need to focus and make a concerted investment in a *single* pilot watershed and provide the resources necessary to bring that entire watershed into attainment with water quality goals. Historically, interest in providing equitable access to program funds has led to a scatter-shot approach that has not left us with any demonstrable water quality improvement.

To date, we have not linked watershed investments to water quality outcomes downstream. Working with SWCDs, Crop Consultants, and Nutrient Service Providers, let's provide the diagnostic tools, technical assistance and cost share funding for agricultural practices for each field within a pilot watershed area.

With a pilot watershed we can learn what it takes and provide a road map for other watersheds in Ohio. The value of this approach will be to learn the scale of implementation of key practices across the watershed needed to improve water quality. We can utilize the results to identify the most effective tools and approaches that can be applied to other watersheds in Ohio. SB 2 can build the tools and the road map we need to deliver effective, measureable results to other watersheds in the state.

Chairman Vitale and Members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee today on SB 2. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.