**Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 2**

**Before the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee**

**Bob Short, President of the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts**

**May 22, 2019**

Chairman Hoagland, Vice-chair Schaffer, Ranking Member O’Brien, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 2. We also wish to thank Senator Peterson for his work in bringing this bill to the Senate.

My name is Bob Short, and I am the President of the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. I know many of you have great relationships with Soil and Water Districts in your communities, but in our 88 soil and water districts we pride ourselves on being “boots on the ground” to get essential conservation work accomplished. Our districts are “locally-led,” meaning districts serve to address conservation, agriculture, natural resource and environmentally-based issues in their communities.

For the past several years, our organization, along with many of the agricultural commodity groups and more recently the state’s environmental groups have partnered together to bring solutions to our water quality and conservation concerns. Our agenda is simple, to identify opportunities to increase conservation efforts and improve water quality in our communities. While the agenda is easy to articulate, the work itself is far more challenging.

Senate Bill 2 would place a watershed coordinator in each watershed throughout the state. These individuals would be additional resources to help coordinate the efforts of our soil and water districts, to reach out to individual landowners about conservation and water quality programs and to help coordinate the efforts of the many interested parties. And there are many interested parties – and this is a good thing – because we all share this very important common goal. While our tactics may be varied, our partnership and commitment to working together is very strong. The addition of watershed coordinators who can provide attention to these efforts throughout the state is appreciated.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the committee. I would be happy to answer any questions.