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Finance Subcommittee on Primary
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Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2019

Chairman Dolan, Vice-Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to stand before you today to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 7. House Bill 7 builds upon the foundation of Governor Mike DeWine's H2Ohio initiative, as well as the H2Ohio Fund passed in the most recent operating budget.

All of us in this room today recognize that Ohio is blessed to have some of the most famous and beautiful bodies of water in the country. We also understand the fact that over the last several decades the quality of these waterways has deteriorated. It is our responsibility to protect and preserve Ohio's water quality in its many lakes and rivers for our future generation to enjoy.

The legislation before you today creates the H2Ohio Trust Fund to provide for the protection, preservation, and restoration of the water quality of Ohio's lakes and rivers. This fund will be governed by the Ohio Water Development Authority (OWDA) and Treasurer of State will act as the executive director of the fund.

This Trust Fund is designed to be **supplemental** in its contribution to H2Ohio funding, and **generational** in its lifespan and impact. Once operational it will be able to provide the H2Ohio Advisory Council millions of dollars for water quality projects.

The H2Ohio Trust Fund is funded through end-of-year unspent balances, appropriations, proceeds from real property transactions, investment returns, and the issuance of obligations by the Treasurer of State.

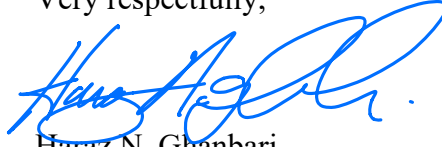
The OWDA will request the Treasurer issue debt when needed and set investment guidelines and parameters for the investment of endowment dollars to ensure money is available to fund future programs. The OWDA will notify annually the H2Ohio Advisory Council of the amount of funds available for distribution through loans or grants. No more than \$100 million will be distributed annually from the trust earnings; this safeguard is designed to prevent a premature erosion of the fund.

This bill also creates the H2Ohio Advisory Council. The 18-member advisory council is designed to bring together a wide range of interests and perspective from around the State. This mechanism is part of the checks and balances we have built into our H2Ohio proposal. In addition to the directors of the Ohio Departments of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Natural Resources (ODNR), as well as the Lake Erie Commission, the Advisory Council would include 10 members appointed by the Governor, two House members appointed by the Speaker of the House, and two Senate members appointed by the Senate President.

The purpose of the H2Ohio Advisory council is to create a statewide strategic vision and comprehensive water protection and restoration strategy to guide funding priorities. It will review and approve annual plans submitted by the Directors of Agriculture, ODNR, and the EPA in order to receive funds available for distribution. The Advisory Council will also notify the public of funds available for grants or loans from the H2Ohio Trust. It will review and approve applicants, and distribute funds awarded.

House Bill 7, which passed with strong bipartisan support in the House, will set up the ability to fund projects that help to preserve and protect Ohio's bodies of water for generations to come.

Very respectfully,



Haraz N. Ghanbari

Member of the Ohio House of Representatives