

Senate Finance Committee
Written Testimony - Proponent
Senate Bill 316

Tracy Freeman, Director of Government Relations
The Nature Conservancy in Ohio
June 3, 2020

Thank you Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee for the opportunity to provide written testimony as a proponent of Senate Bill 316, the capital reappropriations bill.

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization with chapters in all 50 states and projects in over 70 countries. More than 65,000 Ohioans are Nature Conservancy supporters and we own and manage over 20,000 acres of nature preserves throughout the state. We are a non-partisan, science-based organization that seeks to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

We know these are unprecedented and concerning times. We want to thank the Senate for this proposal that continues ongoing investments in Ohio's future. The reappropriations in this bill will advance projects across the state that stimulate local economies and provide Ohioans with improved facilities to utilize and enjoy.

The Nature Conservancy supports the reappropriation of \$101 million for the Clean Ohio Conservation fund, \$25 million for the Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement fund, and \$1 million for the Clean Ohio Trail fund. We also support the appropriations for millions of dollars in previously approved projects under the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. These investments benefit Ohioans across the state and are critically important as we connect with nature and engage in outdoor recreation during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

As Ohio Office of Budget and Management Director Murnieks noted in her testimony before this committee, the debt service associated with the projects in this bill has already been accounted for in the state's budget. There are significant benefits to be realized by stimulating local communities at this uncertain time in our state. We are glad that the Senate has chosen to include all previously agreed-upon reappropriations in this bill and agree that the ongoing projects represented by the funding in the bill will be an important mechanism to help our communities recover economically from the necessary response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your time and we urge your continued support for both the Clean Ohio and ODNR re-appropriations as this bill moves forward. Investing in the future of our communities and the natural areas we all enjoy is a vital part of our recovery from the pandemic. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 316.