



Senate Judiciary Committee
SB 33
March 20, 2019

Chairman Eklund, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Joseph Pheil and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Rural Water Association (ORWA). Since 1976 ORWA has provided on-site technical assistance to rural communities with water and wastewater systems throughout Ohio. Today, we continue to expand our membership and the base of benefits we provide to our members. Our system members provide water and/or wastewater services to approximately 2.01 million Ohioans. I contact you today to urge your support for SB 33, which would help protect critical infrastructure facilities operating in Ohio.

SB 33, or the "Ohio Critical Infrastructure Protection Act," would increase the penalties associated with criminal actions against a critical infrastructure facility. It would also hold organizations found to be complicit in the offenses liable for the damage caused. By increasing these penalties, Ohio's lawmakers will help protect the state's critical infrastructure from those individuals and organizations who go beyond a peaceful protest and instead attempt to disrupt and damage operations at a facility.

While most activist engage in civil and productive protests, there are some who cross the line and attempt to tamper with or vandalize a utility's operations. In the case of a water and wastewater systems, such malicious actions could be deadly to the citizens our members serve.

ORWA appreciates the sponsor's willingness to work with us on the development of this legislation and we urge the committee's support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph Pheil". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joseph Pheil, Executive Director
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