

Ohio Senate Finance Committee

Testimony of the
Ohio Water Partnership
House Bill 110
June 2021

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide interested party testimony in regard to funding of water quality issues, specifically for the H2Ohio program, as contained in House Bill 110, the State Budget for fiscal years 2022 and 2023.

My name is Carol Kauffman, and I am the Manager of Corporate Social Responsibility for ScottsMiracle-Gro, an Ohio-based company based in Marysville for more than 150 years. Water, our most precious natural resource, is critical to all living things, including lawns and gardens. That's why our company is committed to solving water stewardship challenges in Ohio and throughout the United States. Achieving clean, abundant water supplies is a challenge much broader than what our company can solve alone, but we are doing our part to help ensure clean waterways through our products and our partnerships with leading university researchers and nonprofits.

However, I am providing this testimony as a member of the Board of Directors of the Ohio Water Partnership.

The Ohio Water Partnership is a broad-based and diverse 501(C)(3) coalition of businesses advocating for sound water policy. Our mission is to ensure a consistent, effective and equitable approach in protecting and preserving Ohio's natural water resources with a focus on promoting Ohio's competitive advantage in clean, safe, affordable water in all its forms across the state.

From Fortune 500 companies to small businesses, the Ohio Water Partnership includes companies and business organizations of all sizes, all of which recognize that the quality of Ohio's water affects the bottom line. In short, we like to say, *Ohio water means business.*

Recently, the six major Ohio business trade associations, including Ohio Water Partnership members the Ohio Manufacturers Association, the Ohio Business Roundtable, NFIB-Ohio, the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation and the Ohio Chamber of Commerce released a priority list of legislative recommendations that "play a role in maintaining a strong Ohio economy." Under the heading, *Keep H2Ohio Flowing*, they espoused their support for, "...continuation of the H2Ohio Program to maximize the public/private partnership to drive water quality solutions in Ohio."



Ohio Water Means Business.

The Administration's proposed budget sought an increase in H2Ohio funding above the FY 2020-2021 levels across four agencies for a total of approximately \$241 million for the FY 2022-2023 biennium. Specifically:

- Department of Agriculture: \$98 million
- Environmental Protection Agency: \$92 million
- Department of Natural Resources: \$50 million
- Lake Erie Commission: \$250,000

As you know, the House trimmed the combined H2Ohio budget by roughly \$92 million. The bulk of those cuts included a \$72 million reduction from the Ohio EPA and a remaining \$20 million reduction from the Department of Agriculture. Funding requests for ODNR and the Lake Erie Commission were left intact, and we appreciate those decisions.

As a business organization, we respect the efforts of the legislature to balance the budget, keep funding increases in check and even perhaps curb some regulatory agency spending. However, in this case, we support the increased funding through the four agencies in their efforts to advance H2Ohio.

Specifically, the funds for the Ohio EPA will not be spent on increased regulation of the business community. In fact, 100% of the dollars will be in the form of capital spending in many districts across the state. Through the H2Ohio umbrella, Ohio EPA would like to expand the replacement efforts for lead fixtures in daycare centers, remove more failing home sewage treatment systems, support construction of needed sewer projects and fund local drinking water projects. Ohio EPA is also supporting a technology vetting process to find innovative solutions from the business community and innovators to address water quality issues. As for the Department of Agriculture, those funds will be used to expand their successful H2Ohio implementation and work with farms in 10 additional counties.

We greatly appreciate the Senate's additional funding contained in the substitute bill for these important water quality efforts, specifically in regard to the Department of Agriculture. We look forward to future conversations and resolutions regarding funding the Ohio EPA's H2Ohio budget requests. Water infrastructure is critical to economic development in our state, and the funds included in the original proposal enabled the state to make significant investment in water infrastructure. As you continue your diligent efforts in setting the budget priorities for the State of Ohio over the coming fiscal years, we ask for your continued support of these important water quality initiatives which include your support for full or near-full funding for the H2Ohio programs in all of the agencies, including the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues. We would be happy to have further discussions.



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