

**Testimony before the Ohio House of Representatives and the Economic and Workforce
Development Committee**

**in support of H. B. 469 to Create the Ohio River Commission of Ohio
Penny Traina CEO/Executive Director Columbiana County Port Authority**

Tuesday, December 3, 2024

Representative Lorenz and members of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee.

My name is Penny Traina I am the CEO/Executive Director of the Columbiana County Port Authority, a quasi-government entity who owns and operates a 45-acre barge/rail/truck terminal known as the Wellsville Intermodal Facility located at 2400 Clark Avenue, Wellsville Ohio and is located at mile post 49, which is the northernmost point of the Ohio River in Columbiana County.

I have had the honor to be appointed to serve as a member on the United States Departments Maritime Transportation System National Advisory Committee (MTSNAC) I also serve on the Ohio Maritime Plan Steering Committee as well as the Access Ohio 2050 Steering Committee with the Ohio Department of Transportation.

I am writing in support of the creation of the Ohio River Commission of Ohio as proposed by the honorable Representative Monica Robb Blasdel and Representative Don Jones. We are thankful to State Representative Robb Blasdel and State Representative Jones who have been great champions of supporting the creation of the Ohio River Commission.

In my position at the port authority, we recognized the need to market the Ohio River. I have been working on this cause since 2017 with many of my colleagues up and down the Ohio River and with our great partners at the Ohio Department of Transportation. We are very passionate about the importance of promoting the Ohio River.

The Ohio River Commission is much needed, currently there is no agency within the state of Ohio to develop or promote the Ohio River as a driver of economic development and tourism. The Ohio River is a much-under-utilized transportation and economic development asset within the State of Ohio. The Ohio River offers a vast, economic and environmentally friendly transportation network.

Presently there is no established method for coordination among Ohio River Communities. The needs and benefits of the river industries are not yet fully understood and there is little coordination among the various stakeholders to promote an effective and efficient Ohio River system.

By creating the Ohio River Commission of Ohio, we can foster future economic planning and development of the river by coordinating with stakeholders along the Ohio River including port authorities, private ports, the maritime service sector, natural resources, tourism, agriculture and utilities. At the same time, we can advocate for advancement of Maritime related issues for initiatives that promote and advance increased commerce, job creation and economic development.

We believe that the benefit of the Ohio River Commission of Ohio will maximize economic activity by developing a strategic plan to evaluate policies, programs, and priorities to offset permanent decline in the coal and steel industry throughout the Ohio River region, and thereby advance opportunities and promote prosperity through the region.

The Ohio River has been recognized for its importance in many ways, but we need to raise awareness and profile the Ohio River and its vast opportunities that awaits.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the Ohio River Commission of Ohio.