



Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit supportive testimony regarding House Bill 599 to designate the walleye as the official fish of Ohio.

Founded in 1957 under the name the Lake Erie Marine Trades Association, the Ohio Marine Trades Association (OMTA) welcome boat dealers, marina operators, watercraft manufacturers, clubs, financial entities, other water-based organizations and the individual recreational boaters throughout the entire State of Ohio.

Recreational boating is a huge driver of economic activity in the state. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources recently did an economic impact study on recreational boating and their finding concluded that in 2022 there was a \$6.40 billion impact in Ohio, accounting for 45,856 jobs. This same study found that:

- 42.1% of Lake Erie boating-time was spent fishing.
- 24.5% of Ohio River boating-time was spent fishing.
- 32% of Inland boating-time was spent fishing.

While there are several types of fish anglers covet, the walleye in Ohio, particularly Lake Erie, are at the top of the list. According to a recent report from the Division of Wildlife: the 2024 adult walleye population prediction is within the top 25% of the past 30 years, comparable to the 1980s when Lake Erie became recognized as the “Walleye Capital of the World.”

OMTA thanks Ranking Member Brennan and Representative Swearingen for introducing the bill. Ohio has designated many of Ohio’s iconic assets as symbols of the State: the cardinal as the state bird; the buckeye as the state tree. It is time for Ohio to designate a state fish to represent the importance of fishing to this state and the walleye fits the bill.

Thank you for the committee’s consideration of this testimony and the legislation.