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H.B. 599: To designate the Walleye as the official state fish of Ohio

Hello everyone, my name is Matthew Kowalewski from Parma and I would just like to say thank you Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Dean, Rep. Brennan and Rep Swearingen and many others for graciously inviting me down to give testimony on House Bill 599 as I believe it will be the **best catch of the day**.

As a proud citizen of this great state we call home, we are a first of many things including America's first traffic light, home to the first man to walk on the moon, Oberlin college being the first to admit African American students and grant women degrees in a co-ed program and even the invention of chewing gum. But I am sad to say, we are only 1 of 3 remaining states in the union to not have an official state fish with the other two being Indiana and Iowa. I must say, **I felt like a fish out of water** hearing this news just to find out the "Un-Official State Fish" is already considered the Walleye and gave Rep Brennan a call.

As Rep Brennan **cast out his line** in search of answers to this fishiness, here are some key facts and figures as to why the Walleye should be our state fish.

1. The Walleye through sport fishing and charter boating throughout this great state brings in just over \$1 billion dollars annually while supporting 34,000 jobs.
2. We have official designations for the following, Mammal, Amphibian, Frog, Flower, Bird, Tree, Song and even Gemstone just to name a few.

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3. As mentioned before, our state mammal is the beautiful white tailed deer with a rough population estimate of 600,000. Meanwhile, roughly 95 million (which is 158 times more) Walleye call our great lake home, truly making us the Walleye capital of the world.
 4. Lake Erie may be the smallest and shallowest of the Great Lakes, but there is a reason Great is in its name. Roughly 50% of all fish found throughout the Great Lakes call Lake Erie home. Now that's what I call a **stocked pond**.
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As Rep Swearingen beautifully alluded to in his opening remarks about 2 weeks ago, imagine sitting at home or going out with friends and family watching The Buckeyes steamroll Iowa or demolish Indiana once again. You have a great meal of a Walleye filet on a toasted bun sitting in front of and realize we weren't the last state without an official fish, but the guys losing by 40 in the 3rd quarter have been too slow **to cast out their reels**.

This bill is not a joke as many may think, but a true statement of

As I come to the end of my remarks, I have a quick personal story about the Walleye to tell. My grandfather came here from Poland in the 1950s for a better life and chose this great state. After having kids, he would regularly take my dad and uncle out to Lake Erie to fish for walleye a few times a month. I've heard countless stories of their time angling for Walleye and I know many of the state officials in this building and state have many similar stories to tell as well.

Today, I stand here in the great halls of this Ohio State house which has been the home to our great states' legislature for 163 years and I speak on behalf of the 95 million Walleye in Lake Erie and ask humbly to not let H.B. 599 be another **red herring or another one that got away like in the past**, but finally

for our Great State and our Great Lake designate a Great State Fish, The
Walleye.

Thank You