



Mr. Chairman, Senator Tim Schaffer, and members of the Committee, my name is Ty McBee. I am a resident of Ross County Ohio, working in the healthcare industry over the last 30 years. I am here today representing Ohio Mountain Bike Alliance (OMBA) and Ohio Trail Partnership (OTP), representing millions of trail users in Ohio.

Along with my colleagues from OTP who have testified over the last 2 days, I am here to advocate for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and to reject HB 33 as it currently stands, and increase the operating budget by \$54 million in FY 2024 and 2025 as originally proposed by ODNR.

OMBA represents hundreds of thousands of mountain bikers in Ohio, seeing significant increases in our community of bikers and those visiting from other states to access our trails. Ohio is, but has even more potential to be a destination for trails. Unfortunately, our neighbors of Maryland, Michigan, Indiana and West Virginia have embraced a much more aggressive trail development strategy. The 2019 Ohio Trail Vision has outlined an approach for Ohio to benefit from the economic development and place-making impact of being a "Trail State." ODNR is integral for this to happen and a functional decrease in their budget will prevent this. ODNR has been instrumental in hosting National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) youth mountain biking at Paint Creek, John Bryan and Hueston Woods. Nationally, NICA has seen a 23% increase over the past 5 years with 27,000 youth mountain bikers. This is Ohio's third season, and new riders and teams have occurred each year, building the next generation of Ohio mountain bikers who need places to ride.

In my home county, ODNR has been a lead partner in trail development. They manage over 70% of the trail systems publicly accessible. Additionally, through their administration of RTP and Clean Ohio funds, they have effectively been 100% of the funding stream of additional trail development over the past two years. Yet, while they have been great partners, we are not at a destination level. Budget decreases will erode any possibility of making that happen, further impacting the Appalachian region to achieve it's potential.

At a time where all Ohioans are facing potentially crisis levels of mental and physical health issues, now is the time to invest in capacities that provide accessibility to the outdoors. Studies demonstrate that exposure to nature has been linked to a host of benefits, including improved attention, lower stress, better mood, reduced risk of psychiatric disorders and even upticks in empathy and cooperation.

In addition to ODNR's operating budget request be restored, we also advocate the operating budget include an additional \$2,000,000 spread over FY24-25 for Tourism Ohio to fund an economic impact study concerning Ohio trail usage.

I urge that the Committee reject HB 33 as written and take action to include ODNR funding to the level requested for FY24-FY25.

I appreciate your consideration.