



Ohio Environmental Council [Action Fund]

December 2, 2024

Proponent Testimony - HCR 14

Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Chair Schaffer, Vice-Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Concurrent Resolution 14 (HCR 14). My name is Melanie Houston, I serve as the Managing Director of Water Policy for the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund (OEC AF).

HCR 14 urges Congress to enact the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Act of 2024. This bipartisan federal legislation would reauthorize the GLRI for five more fiscal years, from 2027 through 2031. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024 will invest up to \$500 million annually to restore and protect the Great Lakes — as well as the streams, rivers and wetlands that feed them.

The GLRI Act of 2024 was introduced in February in the U.S. Senate by Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and J.D. Vance (R-OH) and in the House by U.S. Representatives David Joyce (R-OH), Debbie Dingell (D-MI), Bill Huizenga (R-MI), and Marcy Kaptur (D-OH). The legislation was also co-sponsored by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Representative Max Miller (R-OH) and many others across the Great Lakes region. It awaits mark up in the US House Transportation and Infrastructure committee.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is an interagency program designed to protect, restore, and maintain the Great Lakes ecosystem for future generations. The Great Lakes hold 90 percent of our nation's supply of freshwater and are the source of drinking water for 40 million people.

Ohio jobs, recreation, and tourism all depend upon a healthy and flourishing Great Lakes ecosystem. Yet invasive species, toxic pollution, harmful algae blooms, beach closures, and climate change threaten the health and productivity of Lake Erie and the other Great Lakes. The GLRI provides critical funding to address these problems by restoring habitat, cleaning up toxic pollution, reducing urban and farm runoff, and managing invasive species.

We urge you to vote yes on HCR 14. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I'd be happy to answer any questions that you might have.

Melanie Houston
Managing Director of Water Policy