



OHIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Matt MacLaren
Director of Travel and Tourism Policy
Ohio Chamber of Commerce
Proponent Testimony – HCR 14
December 3, 2024

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for House Concurrent Resolution 14 (HCR 14) urging the United States Congress to pass the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024. My name is Matt MacLaren, and I am the Director of Travel and Tourism Policy for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

The Ohio Chamber is the state's leading business advocate, and we represent over 8,000 companies that do business in Ohio. We support Ohio House Concurrent Resolution 14 because Lake Erie is vital to our way of life for Ohioans and Ohio businesses.

The Great Lakes support 1.3 million jobs, generating \$82 billion in wages. They provide drinking water for more than 30 million people. And, Lake Erie generates entertainment for millions of Ohioans. In fact, the 8 Ohio counties that border Lake Erie support over 126,000 tourism jobs and generate \$17.2 billion in visitor spending each year.

Popular Ohio tourism attractions along the lake include Cedar Point, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Geneva on the Lake, the National Museum of the Great Lakes, Maumee Bay State Park, the Biggest Week in American Birding, and many more. Popular tourism activities along the lake include fishing, birding, and boating. Recent numbers on the total number of boaters in Ohio are an example of how a healthy lake benefits Ohioans. Ohio has seen its number of boaters grow in recent years. We now rank fourth in the United States in terms of registered boats, resulting in a remarkable annual economic impact of \$6.4 billion.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has made the great lakes, including Lake Erie, healthier. Since it began in 2010, the GLRI has contributed to the protection and preservation of the Great Lakes, including successful cleanup and delisting of areas of concern, restoring 50,000 acres of coastal wetlands across the region, and reducing phosphorus runoff and harmful algal blooms.

The Ohio Chamber of Commerce supports HCR 14, and we want to thank the sponsors of the resolution, Representatives Patton and Skindell, for championing this issue in Ohio. HCR 14 urges the United States Congress to pass the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024, which would reauthorize the successful Great Lakes Restoration Initiative for another 5 years.

The GRLI is a successful initiative, and continuing it is one of the best ways to protect and preserve Lake Erie for the use of Ohioans, our visitors, and our future generations. We also want to thank the sponsor of the federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act proposal, Congressman David Joyce of northeast Ohio, for his efforts in 2019 and again in 2024 to renew this important program.

Thank you for your time, and I will be happy to answer any questions from the committee.