



December 3, 2024
Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
RE: HCR 14

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Tony Yankel. I am the President of the Ohio Lakefront Group, and I am submitting this letter in support of House Concurrent Resolution 14.

HCR 14 is bipartisan legislation sponsored by Representatives Tom Patton and Michael Skindell which urges Congress to support the reauthorization of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) supports projects that reduce harmful algal blooms, prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species, and restore fish and wildlife habitats. The program was launched and funded in 2010 and has funded thousands of restoration projects. The program is set to expire in 2026, but the federal legislation would extend the program through 2031 and increase appropriation levels from \$475 million to \$500 million.

Not only are we advocates for protecting the constitutionally protected private property rights that we hold along the shoreline and in coastal areas, but we are strongly invested in the health and protection of the waters and water quality of Lake Erie. We have been strong proponents of protecting Lake Erie and its shoreline since long before it was of interest to policy makers and conservation activists. Issues like algal blooms, water contamination, and invasive species not only impact the public trust interest in Lake Erie, but they impact our members and our communities in a myriad of ways – from drinking water quality, the ability to enjoy our privately held property, and the economic interests of many of our members whose small and large businesses rely on Lake Erie and the economic opportunities it generates.

We especially support projects that improve stormwater runoff and adverse discharges (especially in urban areas), identify and curb Asian Carp and other invasive aquatic nuisance species, work with willing landowners to improve coastal wetlands, and assist Ohio's farmers with technical conservation assistance including reducing soil erosion, excess nutrient load, and runoff. Many of these programs are funded by the GLRI.

The Ohio Lakefront Group is committed to the reality that we can protect the environmental health and quality of Lake Erie while respecting the private property rights of littoral owners, and we will continue to speak up in favor of projects and legislation that maintain a balance between the two.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you on this and other issues of importance to Lake Erie and our members.