

**Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee**

**Proponent Testimony: House Concurrent Resolution 14**

Chair Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as a proponent of House Concurrent Resolution 14 to urge the United States Congress to pass the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024.

My name is Christian Kamm, and I am the External Affairs Associate for The Nature Conservancy in Ohio. The Nature Conservancy is a global organization with chapters in all 50 states and projects in over 70 countries. We are a non-partisan, science-based organization that seeks to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We work collaboratively with other conservation organizations, farmers, businesses, sportsmen groups, governments, and local communities to develop pragmatic solutions to conservation challenges including land protection and water quality. More than 65,000 Ohioans are Nature Conservancy supporters, and we own and manage over 20,000 acres of nature preserves throughout the state.

The Nature Conservancy supports the passage of HCR 14 to protect one of the most important natural resources our state has – Lake Erie. Not only is this precious resource a major economic driver in Ohio – bringing in an estimated \$2.2 billion in tourism and over 13,000 tourism jobs each year, it's also a source of potable water for 3 million Ohioans and 11 million people in the Midwest. In addition to the benefits it provides to humans, Lake Erie is the most biologically productive of all the Great Lakes and as such, is crucial to preserving the biodiverse ecosystems that call this region home. Beyond Ohio and Lake Erie, the Great Lakes are the largest source of freshwater on the planet. At a time when parts of this country are facing increasingly strained freshwater resources, it is crucial that we conserve the bountiful reserve of water that we have right in our backyard. HCR 14 is a way for Ohio to show our state's commitment to being responsible stewards of the resources we have been blessed with.

The Nature Conservancy respectfully urges you to pass HCR 14 to proudly affirm Ohio's commitment to protecting the largest source of freshwater in our state and on the planet. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Christian Kamm  
External Affairs Associate - Ohio  
The Nature Conservancy