



Testimony of Cleveland Water Alliance
Senate General Government Committee
May 9, 2023

Good morning, Chairman Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Senate General Government Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on behalf of Cleveland Water Alliance.

My name is Bryan Stubbs, and I am the Executive Director and President of Cleveland Water Alliance (CWA). Although Cleveland is in our name, we are a statewide organization focused on what is known as the “blue economy” or the “water economy”: the concept that water has significant economic value. Our organization supports businesses that use water, utilities that treat water, state research institutions, and global companies creating cutting-edge technology; all within the water economy.

Last budget cycle, the State of Ohio invested in us on the heels of an incredibly competitive national USEDA grant where CWA was one of only seven organizations and the only freshwater-focused organization to receive funding. On behalf of our partners, I would like to say thank you to Governor DeWine, his administration, and the legislature for the continued attention and support to these issues. I’d like to spend a minute today talking about how we’ve put those funds to use as well as share our roadmap in making Ohio a top tier destination for innovation, thus spurring our state’s economy. Today, our water economy supports tens of thousands of local jobs as well as billions of dollars of economic impact.

As a non-profit economic development organization, we bring together research, industry, and utility partners to enhance the Great Lakes region's water economy, which includes all of Ohio’s watersheds as well as the Ohio River. This work is critical – not only because we are living in an increasingly water-stressed world, but also because this work creates jobs and grows industries that protect and manage our most precious freshwater resources across the country.

Prior state funding has been incredibly impactful for our work. Thanks to this funding from last biennium, the Lake Erie Watershed is now the largest digitally connected freshwater body in the world. Practically speaking, we created a telecommunications network covering more than 6,000 square miles over the Lake so that sensors, whether on bridges, buoys or along the coast could transmit data in real time. Why was this necessary? With this infrastructure, utilities and municipalities have access to an early-warning system for public health concerns, detecting a harmful algal bloom before it becomes a major concern for our drinking water, assessing whether beach conditions are safe for recreation, or providing real-time information to rescue operations. With this infrastructure built out, companies from all over the world are choosing Ohio to demonstrate, validate, and even pilot their freshwater solutions and technologies via this world-class water accelerator “testbed.” An asset of this caliber – allowing water innovation



companies the to test their technology in a variety of ‘real-world’ conditions – does not exist anywhere else in the world. If funded, our request in this year’s budget would fund expanding these digital assets into the Ohio River valley over the next two years, with our partner, ORSANCO-the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission.

In addition to the internet connectivity we’ve built over Lake Erie, our other testbed includes a ‘pipe farm’ in Parma, Ohio where innovators are trialing technologies to identify lead service lines without breaking ground. This innovation is critical to saving time, money, and efforts not only throughout the State, but around the nation as municipalities and utilities work to follow the federal Lead Service Line replacement mandates to ensure that everyone has access to clean, safe drinking water.

The next phase in our testbed expansion includes establishing an industrial testbed that aims to monitor the resource use of water-intensive companies, inviting a sustainable attraction of water-using industries to the region: such as advanced manufacturing, metal fabrication, chemical, coatings, food processing, servers and more. This will allow us to trial exciting industrial technology, as well as ensure our freshwater resources are monitored as companies look to our region to relocate from water-scarce environments. We were consulted on the Intel project regarding water use, for example.

The momentum at this moment in time is one of urgency as we have a real chance to establish Ohio as the freshwater capital of the world. Our reputation as a valuable destination for innovative water technology is growing at lightning speed. We are witnessing the rise in demand in deal flow opportunities we oversee. We are receiving an increase in requests for local manufacturing connections and business support services. Over the last two years we’ve watched Lake Erie and the Great Lakes region become a globally recognized place to do business within the water economy. We’ve been invited to attend and speak at more than 30 conferences in 2022, including events in Germany, France, Spain, Canada, the Netherlands, and South Korea, which have generated hundreds of business leads from around the world. These companies are interested in piloting technologies, connecting with manufacturers, or establishing new US-based offices.

Finally, we’ve deployed nearly 50 technologies from over a dozen countries thus far and have a waitlist of more than 30 companies – from start-ups to multimillion dollar corporations headquartered all over the world - to utilize our testbed this year. CWA has also secured a technology pilot from an overseas partner, Techwin, that would significantly mitigate supply-chain issues for utilities. Research projects that the global “smart water management” market will exceed \$23 billion by 2027, and we want Ohio to be at the forefront of such an opportunity. Therefore, we are requesting \$3m each fiscal year for the Cleveland Water Alliance Sustainable Water Technologies Initiative. Thank you for your time today and for your consideration of further funding the water economy. I’m happy to answer any questions you may have.