



Sponsor Testimony

H.B. 312 Designating the Walleye as the Official State Fish of Ohio

Chair Miller, Vice Chair Hiner, and Committee members of the Arts, Athletics, and Tourism Committee, please accept my sponsor testimony in support of the passing of H.B. 312 designating the Walleye as the State Fish of the Great State of Ohio.

My storied career in the Environmental Revitalization of Lake Erie and the progress of the restoration of our State has realized numerous successes that have shown the strength in the honorary designations and celebrations of species, geographies, events, and “comebacks” that tell the story of what Ohio is all about. As the author of the 2015 Remedial Action Plan for the Cuyahoga River Area of Concern AOC (which I still hold a seat on the Advisory Council), a proponent in the development of the Central Lake Erie Basin Collaborative, a lead reviewer for the International Certification Committee for the Society of Ecological Restoration out of Washington DC, and an advisor to many habitat efforts throughout the country, the designation of the Walleye as State Fish is much more than ceremonial. It is a culminating honoring of a booming fishing industry for Ohio and a showcase of restoration efforts statewide. Building upon state successes such as the H2Ohio Program, Lake Erie Commission, Ohio Sea Grant, and so many others that have dedicated their resources to the state, the Walleye holds a place of honor and prominence as I’m sure you’ve read through other testimonies from my colleagues.

This designation will build off of the species vitality boosted by the nutrient management success Senator Hicks-Hudson and the GLLC have been working towards since 2019. It also is a proof of concept of the power of the delisting of the Ashtabula Area of Concern in Representative Thomas’s District 65 and significant investment from the USEPA in removing fish habitat impairments statewide. While there have been cases made for other sensitive species throughout the state such as the muskellunge (Muskie), pumpkinseed sunfish, bass etc. there are no species that truly tell the social, economic, ecological, and cultural story of the state of Ohio like the Walleye. In fact, Lake Erie as well as the Ohio River are home to an abundance of fish in the percid family (Walleye, Yellow Perch, Sauger), with none more iconic to the culture of the state than the Walleye itself.

A highlight of the prominence of the Walleye industry and impact in our Great Lake Erie is a testament to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Governor DeWine’s H2Ohio Program, the OhioEPA’s surface water department successes through Section 319 and WRRSP, Ohio Public Works’ Clean Ohio Greenspace effort, and many other efforts of impact that have aided in making Ohio the undisputed **Walleye Capital of the World**.

Please join me in supporting this historic effort led by Representatives Brennan and Swearingen by moving for the passage of H.B. 312. This success will afford our ecological restoration industry to leverage the progress through interpretation, public education, restoration dollars, ecotourism, and many other avenues with the Walleye at the center. If any expansions of the above are desired, I’m happy to confer with interested committee members as needed.

Sincerely,

Peter Bode

Nature Center at Shaker Lakes President and CEO

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Society of Ecological Restoration- Outreach Committee/ International Certification Committee

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