

Written Testimony of Dr. Adam M. Levine
Edward Drummond and Florence Scott Libbey Director & CEO
Toledo Museum of Art
Before the Ohio House of Representatives
Hearing on House Bill 312

September 30, 2025

Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 312, which would designate the walleye as the official state fish of Ohio. My name is Dr. Adam M. Levine, and I serve as the Edward Drummond and Florence Scott Libbey Director & CEO of the Toledo Museum of Art.

The Toledo Museum of Art (TMA) has stood as one of Ohio's cultural anchors since 1901. We are proud to serve not only the city of Toledo and the Northwest Ohio region but also the state and the nation. Most recently, TMA was honored as the best art museum in the country for 2025 by USA Today, a recognition that underscores our role on the global stage. As an institution, we are deeply committed to advancing cultural pride, strengthening community identity, and connecting Ohio to the world through the arts.

The walleye embodies many of the same qualities that Ohio's arts and cultural institutions strive to represent: resilience, beauty, and a profound connection to community. Sport fishing generates an estimated \$1.19 billion annually in economic input for Ohio, with the walleye fishery in Lake Erie standing as one of the most productive in the world. Our state is home to an estimated 72.1 million walleye, a remarkable resource that sustains tourism, recreation, and family traditions, while reinforcing Ohio's reputation as a destination for natural beauty and outdoor activity.

Yet, Ohio remains one of only a handful of states without an official state fish. Forty-six states already have state fish designations, placing Ohio in the minority. Many of our neighboring states have long embraced this tradition: Michigan recognizes the brook trout, Pennsylvania designates the brook trout, West Virginia names the brook trout, and Kentucky honors the Kentucky spotted bass. By adopting the walleye, Ohio would join its peers in celebrating a symbol that reflects both natural heritage and statewide pride.

The walleye is deeply embedded in our identity, celebrated in our cuisine, immortalized in our sports teams, and embraced by communities from Toledo to Port Clinton, proudly known as the "Walleye Capital of the World." In Toledo's case, we further affirm that identity through the Toledo Walleye hockey team, competing in the ECHL, which carries the name of this iconic fish into arenas and communities across the region. To designate the walleye as our state fish is to honor not only the biodiversity of Lake Erie, one of the most historically and environmentally important lakes in North America, but also the heritage and pride of generations of Ohioans.

As an art museum director, I would be remiss not to draw the connection between the walleye and the arts. Artists across history have turned to the natural world as inspiration, and the walleye with its golden shimmer, iridescent scales, and dynamic form, embodies the very qualities of light, texture, and movement that inspire artistic creation. In this sense, the walleye is more than a natural resource: it is a symbol of beauty and resilience that reflects the values and imagination of our state.

For these reasons, the Toledo Museum of Art strongly supports House Bill 312 and encourages the General Assembly to adopt the walleye as Ohio's official state fish. This designation would affirm both our natural and cultural heritage, strengthen Ohio's identity, and celebrate a resource that unites ecology, economy, community, and art.

Thank you for your leadership on this matter, and for your consideration of this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Adam M. Levine
Edward Drummond and Florence Scott Libbey Director & CEO
Toledo Museum of Art