

House Finance Committee
HB 96 Informal Hearing
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Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Rose Sweeney, and members of the Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony supporting specific provisions in Governor Dewine's proposed budget. I am Dan Yaussy, Chair of the Governor's Forestry Advisory Council, which provides support and guidance to the ODNR, Division of Forestry (Division). Since my focus is Ohio's forests, I will restrict my remarks to the portions of the budget that impact the Division.

According to the Ohio Revised Code, "...the division of forestry shall be responsible for the conservation and development of forests within this state." That is all forests, not just the forests owned by the State. Eighty-five percent of Ohio's forests are privately owned. The Division provides advice, education, programs, and grants to private landowners and local communities.

The Division's Service Foresters provide advice on proper forest management, availability of cost share programs, and help forest landowners take advantage of Ohio's Forest Tax Law. This advice helps the public provide sustainable forest products to industries for years to come. The Buckeye State Tree Nursery will produce seedlings that are in demand by tree farmers and natural resource programs such as the Division of Wildlife and Project H2Ohio. The Division provides grants to support local fire departments' suppression efforts and supports a wildfire protection zone in 43 Ohio counties.

Recreation opportunities are provided for the public on managed and unmanaged areas of the State Forests. Hunting is available on most State Forests and extensive hiking, horse, and ORV (off road vehicle) trails are available on many. The Division harvests from the State Forests every year, contributing to the local economies and employment. Rural Ohio school districts, their corresponding counties, and townships benefit from money set aside from the harvest of timber from Ohio's state forests through the Trees to Textbooks program.

Finally, I wish to state that I support Governor Dewine's budget for the ODNR, Division of Forestry.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify regarding HB 96's impact on Ohio's forests, and I will answer any questions you have to the best of my ability.