

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 3/4/25

Name: Hope Taft

Are you representing: Yourself ☐ Organization ☒

Organization (If Applicable): Ohio Scenic River Association

Position/Title: Board Member

Address: 2933 Lower Bellbrook Rd

City: Spring Valley State: OH Zip: 45370

Best Contact Telephone: 937 848 2993 Email: ohiohoper@yahoo.com

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes ☒ No ☐

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 96

Specific Issue: ODNR budget DNAP section, Scenic Rivers part

Are you testifying as a: Proponent ☒ Opponent ☐ Interested Party ☐

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 3 minutes

Please provide a brief statement on your position: please deistribute the following:
Scenic River testimony in favor of the current ODNR/DNAP budget in HB 96 , by Hope Taft

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Hope Taft and I live on the Little Miami River in Greene County. It was Ohio's first state scenic river and the first national one in Ohio, due to the efforts of concerned citizens. As you know Ohio was the first in the nation to pass a bill to protect wild, scenic, and recreational rivers and has criteria for each level.

There are currently 16 scenic rivers in Ohio whose designations date from the passing of the bill in 1968 to 2024. Its language was clarified in 2023 so that the public could more easily understand that it only applied to government related activity within 1000 ft of a scenic river.

The Ohio Scenic River Association was started shortly after the law's 50th anniversary to encourage the scenic rivers to work together, share ideas, and raise awareness of the importance of all waterways in Ohio to the state's recreational and economic assets... the most important being its ability to provide safe, clean water to drink, use in recreational pursuits and for economic development.

The current budget as submitted by the Governor in HB 96 will work to do that. And I hope you will pass intact the parts of the ODNR/ DNAP budget that speak to the scenic rivers. I believe they are found in C4:4, C1:5:1, and C1:1:1 of the bill. The Scenic Rivers program is a natural fit within the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, because they preserve some of the wildest and most scenic parts of the state and have watchful eyes to help them remain that way. They add major pathways for wild animals and birds to find suitable living spaces.

We hope to expand the number of scenic rivers in the state in the coming years so if you can add more money to the Scenic River Budget, it would help the department properly manage an increased workload. As a member of a State Scenic River Advisory Board, I can tell you there is lots of interaction between scenic rivers officials and governmental agencies on issues that need discussion and resolution to protect the quality of the rivers.

In addition, I request that you consider and support the protection of all the waters of Ohio, especially of those that flow into the Ohio River. I feel these streams are vulnerable to excessive exploitation from within the state and by outside actors. Ohio's water is one of our greatest assets, but first, it needs to remain ample in quantity and safe for drinking to satisfy the needs of the people of Ohio.

People can only live 3 days without drinkable water, and it requires both resources and attention to protect this essential source of life.

Thank you for letting me speak with you today.

Submitted by:

Hope Taft, First Lady of Ohio 1999-2007

Ohio Scenic River Association, board member

2933 Lower Bellbrook Road, Spring Valley Ohio 45370, ohiohoper@yahoo.com

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.