



Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee: My name is Michelle Burke, and I am the President of the Ohio Marine Trades Association (OMTA). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today in support of the Governor's H2Ohio Initiative. The Ohio Marine Trades Association (OMTA) welcome boat dealers, marina operators, watercraft manufacturers, clubs, financial entities, other water-based organizations and the individual recreational boaters throughout the entire State of Ohio.

A key element to a safe and fun boating experience is clean water. The H2Ohio program, a multi-agency effort to tackle Ohio's water quality issues, is a revolutionary program that is taking on water quality from many angles. From working with farmers on best nutrient management practices, to updating Ohio's water treatment facilities, to funding wetland project, all of these efforts put together are moving the needle on improving Ohio's water.

Spurred by the proliferation of harmful algal blooms (HABs), H2Ohio is working to reverse course on pollution in our water. A algae bloom on Lake Erie isn't just an eye sore, it deprives the water of oxygen and kill aquatic animals. Ohio's waters are an economic ecosystem, if the water quality declines, Ohio loses across the board.

A recent economic impact study from ODNR concluded that in 2022 boating had a \$6.40 billion impact in Ohio, accounting for 45,856 jobs. A favorite boating activity is fishing, as Lake Erie is recognized as the "Walleye Capital of the World." Ohio's waters are key drive of Tourism spending generating \$56 billion is visitor spending and indirect business sales. Access to clean, fresh water attracts industries to build and expand here with Intel siting this as a key reason for selecting Ohio.

Not every state has access to the abundance of water the Ohio has, and we have a duty to protect it. H2Ohio is that protector. We encourage the Senate to restore the Governor's proposed budget for the H2Ohio program. I appreciate you considering this perspective.

Michelle Burke
President
Ohio Marine Trades Association