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Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Ohio Statehouse
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of the H2Ohio program and to share the perspective of Resource Environmental Solutions (RES), the nation's leading ecological restoration firm as your committee reviews the budgeting decisions for the State passed in House Bill 96.

We wanted to provide you with this written testimony to further clarify our position on the passing of House Bill 96 specifically as it has to do with the funding of the H2Ohio program. At RES, we are proud to partner with the State of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in advancing water quality through innovative and science-based restoration projects. We have been privileged to work on several H2Ohio projects to date, and we view this program as one of the most visionary and impactful water quality initiatives in the country. We encourage the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee to reconsider cutting funding to the H2Ohio program.

Prioritizing H2Ohio in Our Mission

RES restores our land and waters with ecological integrity and innovation, project by project. We support the rehabilitation and stewardship of nature's resources alongside responsible human progress. In Ohio, that mission aligns directly with the goals of the H2Ohio program. Our team has prioritized H2Ohio projects because of the program's focus on evidence-based solutions, measurable outcomes, and long-term environmental stewardship. From constructed wetlands to floodplain reconnection and nutrient filtration systems, H2Ohio has created the conditions necessary for transformative restoration work. Water quality across Ohio will be significantly reduced with only Western Lake Erie Basin H2Ohio program funding versus statewide funding.

Demonstrated Benefits of H2Ohio Funding

H2Ohio funding has enabled the restoration of degraded landscapes, the reduction of phosphorus and nitrogen runoff, and the protection of some of Ohio's most vulnerable waterways—particularly in the Western Lake Erie Basin but also in the Central and Ohio River Basins. The results are not just ecological but also economic and social: cleaner water for communities, more resilient farmland, and stronger natural infrastructure that supports outdoor recreation, wildlife, and public health.

As a prime example, RES, in partnership with The University of Toledo Foundation and ODNR, developed the UT CADE Restoration Project in Toledo. This 49-acre, turn-key restoration initiative is designed to reduce nutrient runoff into the Ottawa River—ultimately protecting the Western Lake Erie Basin. The project (currently in the maintenance phase) addresses significant stream bank erosion, degraded wetlands, and disrupted floodplain function through a comprehensive approach that includes floodplain design and excavation, log and rock structures, native seeding, and invasive species control. This restoration will not only reduce nutrient and sediment pollution but also enhance habitat, improving flood resiliency, and provide long-term educational and recreational opportunities for the university and the community.

Similarly, RES completed the Maumee River Water Trail Mile 35 Restoration Project in partnership with the Henry Wood Sportsman Alliance and ODNR. This 50-acre site, historically used for agriculture, will be restored to native floodplain and wetland systems through H2Ohio-funded activities including land acquisition, wetland re-establishment, microtopographic grading, native planting, pilot channel creation, and riparian buffer enhancement. This project will return vital ecological functions to the Maumee River floodplain, improving water quality and wildlife habitat across the Western Lake Erie Basin. It is currently in the maintenance phase of the project lifecycle as well.



H2Ohio has empowered RES to deliver high-impact restoration at scale. Importantly, the ability to use H2Ohio funding for land acquisition is key to enabling these outcomes—allowing us to convert marginal or degraded land into functioning ecological systems that deliver water quality benefits for decades to come.

Closing Thoughts

We respectfully urge the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee to continue its strong support of the H2Ohio program which entails restoring full funding to the program. It is delivering results, fostering collaboration, and positioning Ohio as a national leader in freshwater conservation and restoration.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue and for your commitment to the health and sustainability of Ohio's natural resources. We at RES remain dedicated to supporting H2Ohio and to partnering with the state in the work ahead.

Respectfully,

Mimi Feldmann-DeMello
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