

Chairman Schaffer, Distinguished members, My name is Paul Brooks, I am the chairman of the Board of the League of Ohio Sportsmen. I am representing many local conservation clubs, rod and gun clubs and individuals. I come to you today to speak about H2Ohio. When Ohio became a state the waterways looked and were a lot different than today. The streams were teeming with fish, and wildlife. We drained the great black swamp in northwest Ohio, the Scioto swamp in west central Ohio, cut down most of the trees and put the land under cultivation. We built cities, we built dams for mills, and here we are today. The Cuyahoga River caught fire in 1969, the streams filled with mud, many fish were gone and raw sewage was common in our waterways. Farming practices changed with more commercial fertilizer being used. I can well remember this time on the farm as streams were filled with green stringy algae due to the increased nutrients draining into the streams. Larger livestock operations followed soon after that. I once had a hog operation that on any given day there were 5000 hogs on the property during the 1980s. Jump forward to 2014 when a harmful algae bloom on Lake Erie forced Toledo to suspend supplying drinking water to citizens. Governor Mike Dewine put forth a program, H2Ohio that is eliminating sewage in our waterways, promoting best practices for farmers and recreating wetlands, nature's kidneys to benefit all Ohioans. The progress has been extraordinary, being on track to reduce the phosphorus load by 420,000 pounds. The ability to purchase lands close to a water way has been very instrumental in the success of this program, at times they are able to simply have an easement to accomplish the goals. Several universities are studying and monitoring the results providing an invaluable source of learning for students that are involved. Today, I ask that you restore the budget monies that the House version cut and to allow the land purchases and easement purchases so that we can continue this program at the levels that are truly needed by the citizens of this state of Ohio.

Respectfully  
Paul Brooks