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James Hoops
State Representative

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee. Thank you for allowing Representative Robinson and I the chance to provide sponsor testimony on House Concurrent Resolution 13, legislation that would designate the Buckeye Trail as a National Scenic Trail.

Whether you're a runner, hiker, cyclist or a walker like myself, the Buckeye Trail's roughly fourteen-hundred and fifty miles offers breathtaking landscapes at just about every mile and has provided a unique glimpse of our states' topography for tourists and Ohioans alike since 1959. Covering 49 counties, 18 State Parks, 8 Historical Society Properties and Ohio's only National Forrest, the Buckeye Trail continues to serve as the glue that bounds our four corridors together as the "Heart of it All".

This resolution will work collaboratively to convey to the National Park Service that the Buckeye Trail meets the evaluation standards of and criteria for its feasibility study. This study will also include an existing conditions analysis, a community stakeholder outreach and public input process in which members of the National Park Service will engage personally with communities along the trail. Following the studies completion, a formal report will then be made to the Secretary of Interior who, we hope, will make an affirmative recommendation to Congress thus completing the designation. Once favorably recommended, the Buckeye Trail will join just 11 other trails across the United States who bear such a title including the Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest, Continental Divide, Potomac Heritage and the Ice Age to name a few. Designation as a National Scenic Trail represents however far more than another title for the Buckeye Trail, rather it serves as a collective desire for an increase in public access to our states' abundant beauty and a greater initiative towards conservation of our natural ecosystems.

Such trail conservation efforts in years past have included waste pickup, the construction of bridges, sign replacements, debris clearing and weed trimming of which many projects I was myself apart of on portions throughout northern Henry County.

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler,, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the committee, thank you once again for allowing me to speak on this resolution and now I'll turn it over to my colleague Representative Robinson.