



HB 96 Testimony - Interested Party

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee, my name is Tony Yankel. I am the president of the Ohio Lakefront Group. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today on behalf of the Ohio Lakefront Group in support of the H2Ohio program.

The Ohio Lakefront Group represents thousands of property owners who own property along Lake Erie. Our membership includes individual property owners, associations, and businesses. Some are year-long residents, and others are seasonal. We come from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, and political beliefs. We are united with the goal of protecting our private property and ensuring that Lake Erie remains the jewel of Ohio.

As people who live on, raise families, and run businesses that are on Lake Erie, we are highly invested in Ohio's efforts to protect the integrity of our greatest resource.

Under Governor DeWine's proposed budget, H2Ohio was slated to receive \$270 million over the biennium. The House-passed version reduced this amount by \$120 million, a cut that would force agencies to massively delay or cut projects and potentially lose momentum. Each dollar invested in H2Ohio yields returns in the form of reduced water treatment costs, improved fish habitat, increased recreational value, and fewer public health threats. While H2Ohio funding will benefit projects and communities across the state, we are especially mindful of how detrimental cutting funding now would be to the long-term health of Lake Erie.

We respectfully urge the Senate to restore the full \$120 million in H2Ohio funding as originally proposed in the As-Introduced version of HB96. Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in. If you have any questions about the Ohio Lakefront Group, please do not hesitate to contact me or our government affairs team.