

To: Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee

From: Matt Misicka, Executive Director
Ohio Conservation Federation

Date: 4 June, 2025



Re: Interested Party Testimony on behalf of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Executive Budget (Sub. HB 96)

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee, I am testifying as the Executive Director of the Ohio Conservation Federation, which educates and advocates for the wise use and stewardship of Ohio's natural resources on behalf of Ohio's hunters, anglers and trappers. Ohio's sportsmen and women support robust funding for our state parks and forests, scenic rivers and natural areas, public hunting and fishing opportunities, and healthy water and wildlife.

While we are grateful that the increase to the non-resident hunting and fishing license fee was maintained, we do have three issues with the current bill. **We ask the Senate to:**

- **Restore cuts to the Division of Wildlife's H2Ohio funding.** Cuts threaten the future of freshwater, wetlands, and fish and wildlife habitat. Ohio's hunters, anglers, trappers, small businesses, and rural communities all benefit mightily from this investment in our sporting heritage and \$2B outdoor economy. We ask that the Senate restore the Division of Wildlife's H2Ohio budget back to *at least* the \$26.5M level.
- **Protect the Division of Wildlife's Oil and Gas Bonus Payments.** Ohio's hunters, anglers, trappers, and recreational shooters worked tirelessly with lawmakers to safeguard protections that direct bonus payments back to the agency (HB 96: Sec 131.50, pgs 433-434, lines 12180-12231). These funds help protect and further develop our sporting heritage and \$2B sporting economy and diminish the need to raise resident hunting, fishing, trapping, and shooting range fees for many years. The Senate's substitute bill weakens the protections that safeguard oil and gas revenues for Wildlife. Sportsmen ask the Senate to support Senator Wilkin's amendment to restore these protections; honoring the agreement made between the government and Ohio's sportsmen and women.
- **Restore cuts to Division of Forestry.** The cuts threaten Forestry's ability to provide valuable assistance to Ohio's family forest owners managing their long-term financial futures and negatively impacts the establishment of the Buckeye Tree Nursery. We ask the Senate to restore the \$650,000 GRF cut from Forestry's budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. Ohio's sportsmen encourage you to take the recommendations of the hunting, angling, and trapping community into consideration during budget deliberations and continue your legacy of investment in the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Ohio's \$12.5 billion-dollar outdoor economy. If I can be of any further assistance or answer any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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