



Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and Members of the House Education and Career Readiness committee for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 549.

My name is Bryan Ralston and I am the current President of the Lake Erie Marine Trades Association (LEMETA). Our association welcomes boat dealers, marina operators, watercraft manufacturers, clubs, financial entities, and other water-based organizations. LEMETA supports the more than 700 Ohio businesses in the marine industry statewide. More than 14,000 Ohioans work in the recreational boating industry and an additional 5,000 work in supporting industries.

HB 549 would specify that schools do not open for instruction until after Labor Day. It is important to note that school districts are afforded flexibility from this if they host a public meeting to discuss starting prior to Labor Day.

Education and learning can also take place outside of a classroom. Ohio's boating education programs are one example of outdoor activities which students can enjoy during the Summer months, while also learning valuable lessons about boating safety and environmental impacts on Ohio waterways.

LEMETA believes HB 549 will not only give families more opportunities to explore and enjoy of all the wonderful types of boating activities available in Ohio, it will also generate more business for boat dealerships, marinas, yacht clubs, gas docks, and retailers selling boating accessories. Additionally, it will make summer employment for high school students more steady and provide consistency to the businesses that hire them. When a boat dealer or marina owner hires a student to work in the summer, it is beneficial to that owner to have assurance that employees can work through the busiest time in the season.

Michigan has required public schools to start after Labor Day since the 2006-07 school year. This initiative in Michigan has spurred economic growth in tourism, and has not decreased the value of a classroom education to our knowledge. Let's take advantage of the great weather for outdoor learning and the bad weather for indoor learning. HB 549 allows this to be accomplished!

I was able to find a couple interesting statistics related to economic impact found on the Division of Parks and Watercraft website. More than \$5.6 million is paid annually in boat registration and titling fees. Boaters paid \$14.8 million in state marine fuel taxes during 2012. Tourism is a \$40 billion per year industry -- Ohio's 3rd largest -- and one that supports the full-time equivalent of approximately 443,000 Ohio jobs that generate nearly \$10 billion in direct earnings. Tourism generated \$2.7 billion in taxes for Ohio in 2011 - \$1.6 billion in state taxes and \$1.1 billion in local taxes.

Chairman Brenner, thank you for your consideration of this legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.