



Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

House Finance Committee, Testimony on HB 463
May 16, 2018

Mr. Chairman, members of the House Finance Committee, I am Kris Swartz, Wood SWCD Supervisor and Past President of the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. And I am proud to share the podium with Mike Libben, Ottawa SWCD Program Administrator and Past President of the Ohio Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Employees. We are both here today to testify on behalf of Ohio's SWCDs in support of House Bill 643.

For nearly 75 years, Ohio's SWCDs have focused its' efforts on taking care of our resources -- all with the goal of leaving these resources better for future generations. We have and continue to be fully committed to seeking water quality improvements, maintaining good soil health, reducing erosion, and improving habitat. Districts **ALL** throughout Ohio are focused on making a positive difference in rural, urban and suburban settings to address these resource challenges.

Today, our workload continues to increase, especially in the Lake Erie Watershed as a result of implementation of Senate Bill 150 and Senate Bill 1. Yet -- we are experiencing greater workforce challenges due to decreased funding. Thus, it is much tougher in getting conservation on the ground.

A few weeks ago, a number of districts in the Lake Erie Watershed had the privilege of meeting with both Senator Gardner and Representative Arndt to share some of the key conservation areas needing attention in the Clean Lake 2020 Plan. SWCDs believe soil testing and nutrient management plans are truly beneficial -- thus we contend that in order to receive funding for cost-share conservation-based practices, soil testing and NMPs must be required. We also believe having more options in the tool-box such as equipment, cover crop / seeding programs, use of blind inlets, water control structures and other water-quality focused initiatives are needed to have success.

But to fully achieve in this effort -- the "boots on the ground" is a must. We stressed that districts are key to the delivery of the federal USDA Farm Bill program. We are heavily involved in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiatives (GLRI), the Regional Conservation Collaboration Program (RCCP), the Western Lake Erie Basin efforts and more. Districts are working collaboratively with the Ohio Soybean Council, OSUE and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to promote and educate the Ag BMPs in the Lake Erie Watershed. We're heavily involved in the 4R's through the creation of our own 4R Tomorrow Program developed with the Ohio Soybean Council and we serve as a member of the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Committee to promote the 4Rs and educate that we are all part of the solution. Furthermore, Districts have carried out the Healthy Lakes Ohio program and continue to focus our efforts on water quality and soil health initiatives. However, we are stretched very thin....

HB 643 will provide much needed resources to enable us to carry out this critical work. While we need to see this funding all throughout the state -- this bill provides a great start in further aiding SWCDs in conservation delivery efforts.

"The Leader in Promoting Natural Resources Stewardship to Enhance Ohio's Quality of Life".



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The additional resources focused to other programs in HB 643 will also make a positive difference in the water quality efforts. We look forward to working with the bill sponsors, the legislature, the administration, our partner agencies and many others as we continue working diligently to move Clean Lake 2020 forward in the days ahead.

On behalf of Ohio's 88 SWCDs, we thank you for believing and supporting our efforts.