



## **Senator Theresa Gavarone**

2<sup>nd</sup> Ohio Senate District  
Sponsor Testimony for Senate Joint Resolution 1  
Senate Finance Committee  
October 1, 2019

Chairman Dolan, Vice-Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I am happy to stand before you today with my joint sponsor, Senator O'Brien, to talk about an issue that is of critical importance to the people of my district—the water quality of Lake Erie.

As many of you know, I represent the longest section of Lake Erie coast of any member in the General Assembly and some of the most fertile farmland in the state, so my interest in this legislation stems from all of the communities and constituents I serve. The people I represent rely heavily on Lake Erie for water, agriculture, and the economic benefits that come from Lake Erie being one of the most popular tourist destinations in the entire state.

Before I talk about why I feel this legislation is important, I would like to thank Governor DeWine for his championing of the H2Ohio program, as well as Chairman Dolan for your work on Senate Bill 2 and leadership on the state operating budget. The budget that was signed into law included nearly \$175 million over the biennium for water quality improvement projects, and set a solid foundation for future discussions about how we can protect the treasure that is Lake Erie.

I would like to state that I am a strong supporter of the H2Ohio program, and the funding we included for these urgent projects in Ohio over the next two years. However, it is important to note that it is only funded through the biennium. I am concerned that the continuation of funding for H2Ohio is reliant on a strong economy.

There is only one proposed plan to date that guarantees, regardless of the strength of our economy, funding for water quality improvement projects in Ohio after June 2021. That plan is the one I have before you today.

Senate Joint Resolution 1 is different than other proposals because voters would need to approve a constitutional amendment to create a \$1 billion bond that would be disbursed over 10 years. Unlike general revenue funds that can be diverted to wherever future General Assemblies or governors want at that particular moment, this money can only be used for water quality improvement projects. Should voters approve the bond we would be able to finance:

- water treatment & wastewater treatment systems
- water quality research
- reducing open lake disposal of dredged material into Lake Erie and other bodies of water, AND
- support agricultural best management practices including water resource management, watershed restoration, and soil and water conservation
- and other sewer and water capital improvements

I'd like to take a quick moment to thank not just Senator O'Brien, but my predecessor Randy Gardner and former colleague Representative Steve Arndt for their dedication to improving the water quality in Lake Erie.

We need to plan for the future of Lake Erie post-2021, and this legislation displays a strong commitment to doing just that.

Chairman Dolan, thank you for the chance to testify on behalf of Senate Joint Resolution 1, and I would be happy to answer any questions after Senator O'Brien delivers his testimony.