



Sponsor Testimony: Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 1
Senate Finance Committee
October 1st, 2019

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to present sponsor testimony today on Senate Joint Resolution 1. This legislation, which is bipartisan in nature, was originally part of an effort I began during the last General Assembly (GA) with former State Senator Randy Gardner to appropriate funds necessary for vital clean water improvements in our state. I am happy to be able to continue these efforts with Senator Gavarone during this GA.

As one who represents a district with many miles of Lake Erie shoreline, and who has seen firsthand the negative effects of unsafe drinking water on Ohio's communities, doing all I can to ensure that Ohio's water supply is clean, safe, and affordable is among my top priorities as a legislator. Because of this, I am happy to join Senator Gavarone in sponsoring SJR 1 which, if passed, would submit a constitutional amendment to Ohio voters for approval during the November 5th, 2019 general election to permit the issuance of general obligation bonds to fund clean water improvements.

Specifically, the constitutional amendment proposed by this joint resolution authorizes the General Assembly, through the issuance of grants financed by the sale of bonds, to assist municipal corporations, counties, townships, and other governmental entities designated by law in financing the cost of:

- Improvements to water treatment and wastewater treatment systems;
- Water quality research;
- Reducing open lake disposal of dredged material into Lake Erie and other bodies of water;
- Supporting agricultural best management practices including water resource management, watershed restoration, and soil and water conservation; and
- Other sewer and water capital improvements.

Additionally, SJR 1 specifically targets areas in Ohio most in need of water improvements by requiring funds to be allocated according to a watershed's proportion of phosphorous loading compared to the total amount of phosphorous in the state's watersheds, and providing that at least 50% is allocated to the various counties of the Western Lake Erie Basin. SJR 1 would also spread these funds out over an extended time period, with the bond issuing authority limited to not more than \$1 billion and a prohibition on the issuance of more than \$100 million of state general obligations in a single year. If annual limits are not reached, the amount not issued may be issued in a subsequent year and does not count towards that fiscal year's limit.

According to some estimates, the maintenance and upgrading of aging drinking water infrastructure alone could cost Ohio cities upwards of \$20 billion over the next two decades. Considering this, the funding created by SJR 1 is just a drop in the bucket toward what we need to do to address water quality issues in our state. Although some progress has been made in Ohio on this front recently, sustained and decisive action here at the Statehouse is required until we no longer have lead in our drinking water and algal blooms in our Great Lake.

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, and members of the committee, thank you again for allowing me to present sponsor testimony on SJR 1. This legislation will go far toward helping us one day achieve our goal of clean, safe, affordable water for all Ohioans. It would not only create a much-needed dedicated revenue source for addressing Ohio's water quality problem, but would also serve as a job creator and, perhaps most importantly, would not raise taxes a dime. I urge your favorable passage of this legislation and would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.