

Committees:

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Sponsor Testimony – House Agriculture and Conservation Committee – October 12, 2021

Chairman Koehler, Vice Chair Creech, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the Agriculture and Conservation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 301.

House Bill 301 will designate the last Saturday of September as Ohio Public Lands Day. This annual day of recognition falls in line with “National Public Lands Day” which has been celebrated since 1994. National Public Lands Day celebrates our community green spaces, urges citizens to take an active role in their environmental wellness, as well as encourages the use of outdoor spaces for recreation, education, and health.

Additionally, National Public Lands Day is one of the nation’s largest, single-day volunteer efforts. Each year hundreds of thousands of volunteers have joined the National Park Service, and their partners, to assist land managers with environmental enhancement and restoration projects. Last year, as a result of in-person National Public Lands Day events, more than 600 acres of land were enriched or restored, about 11,000 square feet of invasive species were removed, 108 miles of trails were restored or maintained, and over 28,000 pounds of trash was collected.

Ohio’s public lands are a vast resource for our communities, and as we continue to make investments in these spaces, we must also continue to celebrate, and raise awareness of all that our state has to offer.

As Co-chair of the Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus, I must mention how this day of recognition could bring attention to improving existing trails in the state and promote the smart planning of future trails. Accessible trails connect and strengthen communities, and provide means of active transportation (walking, running, biking) to local resources and opportunities.

By designating the last Saturday of September as Ohio Public Lands Day, we have the opportunity to localize the positive impacts seen from the national day of recognition here in our state. By raising awareness of the benefits of our public lands here in Ohio we can encourage civic and environmental involvement, as well as connect communities to the outdoor groups and spaces in their area.

Again, Chairman Koehler, Vice Chair Creech, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the Agriculture and Conservation Committee, I thank you for your time. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.