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## HB 171 Proponent Testimony Michael Mennett, Executive Director, Keep Ohio Beautiful

### House Economic & Workforce Development Committee

Chair Baldrige, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, I am Michael Mennett, Executive Director of Keep Ohio Beautiful (KOB). I am here today to offer our support for HB 171, which we believe will further the community-based work of Keep Ohio Beautiful.

Keep Ohio Beautiful, a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization, believes that everyone deserves to live in an environment that is healthy, safe, clean, and beautiful. As a state affiliate of Keep America Beautiful (our national organization), Keep Ohio Beautiful serves as Ohio's umbrella organization for our local 40 affiliate organizations in numerous Ohio communities.

By providing a strong support system and the sharing of best practices, Keep Ohio Beautiful enables volunteers in communities throughout Ohio to improve waste handling practices, litter prevention, recycling, beautification, and community greening efforts. Since our inception, Keep Ohio Beautiful has worked to shift public attitudes against litter and littering behavior.

### Pandemic Challenges

The KOB mission empowers communities to take greater responsibility for improving our local environment through litter prevention, beautification, community greening, waste reduction and recycling. The three tenets of KOB are End Littering, Improve Recycling, and Beautify Communities.

In 2020, through the COVID-19 pandemic challenge, we realized how strong KOB is with our local affiliate network supporting, sharing, and engaging new ways of thinking about how to implement our mission. Litter amid COVID-19 is both a scourge and a rallying point for all. While traditional litter remained a problem on the ground, the face of litter changed to plastic gloves, masks, and wipes in parking lots and waterways.

For years, Keep Ohio Beautiful has been raising awareness of the health and safety dangers of litter, through our Environmental Law Enforcement Workshops. PPE litter has brought that message to the forefront. For years to come, the narrative around litter will shift back to a place of health and safety issues and Keep Ohio Beautiful ready to answer the call to keep our communities safe.

## **Our Statewide Results**

Our year-round educational events and programs offer exceptional opportunities for communities, civic organizations, corporations, and government jurisdictions to increase their statewide visibility and showcase our environmental programs and commitment to a clean and beautiful Ohio. In 2019-2020, we provided the residents of our state 1,353,173 hours logged by volunteers at over 4500 events, picked up 3,839,422 pounds of litter, and over one million pounds of solid waste diverted from landfills.

### **12:1 Return on Community Improvement Initiatives**

For every \$1 invested in KOB community improvement projects, KOB volunteers return \$12 in measurable benefits. This ROI stretches scarce public tax dollars and maximizes the benefit of private donations among our 40 affiliates. We are excited for five new affiliates that will join our network in 2021-2022, an additional 4 new Ohio counties plus one City and one Village will be reaching over 100+ communities (City of Kirtland, Village of Hebron, Lawrence County, Geauga-Trumbull Counties, and Portage County).

### **Partnerships Improve Communities**

KOB forges public-private partnerships that strengthen communities, protect land, and water, and improve quality of life. We leverage funding and resources from both private businesses and state agencies such as Airstream, CSRAB, Columbia Gas, Davey Tree, Honda, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio EPA, Ohio Turnpike, O-I, Scotts Miracle-Gro, Sherwin Williams, and many more Ohio-based employers.

### **HB 171 Value**

Everyone is critical. We intend to increase access to beautiful, clean, and green public space so that all individuals can live in a beautiful community. Furthermore, the process of defining and creating solutions for communities should include all members of the community.

Since our founding in 1979, we have strived to make Ohio's communities more beautiful places to live, work, and play. That remains at the heart of our impact. HB 171 will provide additional resources to help support this community-based work.

We are excited to get the Keep Ohio Beautiful license plates rolling so our volunteers and supporters can proudly display a visible sign of our work making Ohio a great place to live, work and play in clean, green communities. KOB is grateful to Representatives Lanese and Ray and many others for their leadership on HB 171. Please consider giving it your full support. Thank you.