



Testimony on H2Ohio

Laurie A. Stevenson, Director

Greetings Chairman Dolan, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Laurie Stevenson, Director of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. Thank you for the invitation to speak to the committee today about Ohio EPA's work under the H2Ohio initiative. I want to thank you for both the leadership and investments that the General Assembly has made to improve water quality and support both drinking water and wastewater infrastructure needs. Today, I want to share how Ohio EPA is administering these dollars to help communities across the state.

Ohio EPA received H2Ohio funding of \$8.675 million each fiscal year of the previous biennium. Ohio EPA's focus areas under H2Ohio include making investments in improving drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, especially in economically disadvantaged communities throughout the state. We provide H2Ohio funding to our local health departments for programs to help homeowners remove and replace failing home sewage treatment systems. We've also provided funding to communities to remove lead service lines and fixtures in daycares. I believe we are making a significant difference in the lives of many Ohioans through these investments, and I am excited to provide more specifics to you on our accomplishments to date under the H2Ohio initiative.

During State Fiscal Year 2020, Ohio EPA provided H2Ohio funding for drinking water infrastructure projects that will serve over 4000 Ohioans in Columbiana, Coshocton, Pike and Noble counties. We also provided funding for wastewater projects that will serve 600 people and 250 homes in Meigs, Miami, and Williams County. We provided funding to local health departments in seven Northwest Ohio counties to support the replacement of 180 septic systems. Funding is also being used to remove 185 lead service lines in Cincinnati daycares. Four of these year one infrastructure projects have completed construction and are now serving water and sewer customers, and the remaining projects are making progress towards completion.

For State Fiscal Year 2021, Ohio EPA awarded \$9.5 million for H2Ohio projects, using the SFY 2021 appropriation and a small amount of carry-over funding from State Fiscal Year 2020. Of this total, \$7.4 million in H2Ohio funding is being used to support 13 communities with drinking water and sewer infrastructure projects. H2Ohio awards for these communities range from \$25,000 to \$1.5 million dollars.

Five drinking water projects, serving an estimated 4,000 Ohioans, are being supported with funding. These projects include waterline extensions in Canton, Noble County, and Morgan County, water treatment plant improvements in Wayne and Meigs Counties, and waterline replacements in Washington County. Eight projects are being funded to provide better sewer services to more than 6,000 homes. These projects include a new wastewater treatment plant and collection system in Darke County, new

sanitary sewers in Columbiana, Lucas, and Adams Counties, and sewer replacement and improvements in Athens, Jackson, and Licking Counties, and design funding for a sewer extension in Hancock County.

For many of these communities, when H2Ohio dollars are combined with sources of funding from other programs and agencies, they are finally able to get their important projects over the finish line that might not otherwise get completed.

During State Fiscal Year 2021, Ohio EPA awarded a total of \$1.6 million to 11 local health departments to repair and replace failing home septic systems. \$150,000 was awarded to Licking, Wayne, Meigs, Hamilton, Lake, Clark, Stark, Lorain, Scioto, Clermont, and Columbiana counties. These funds are being used to assist economically disadvantaged homeowners repair or replace their failing septic systems. By leveraging H2Ohio dollars in conjunction with federal grant funds from our Water Pollution Control Loan Program, we estimate that 400 failing systems will be repaired or replaced.

Ohio EPA awarded \$500,000 to assist Cleveland in replacing city-owned lead service lines at daycares. The city estimates that about 440 daycares are connected to lead drinking water pipes. Removing these pipes and fixtures will help ensure we reduce the risk of lead exposure in drinking water for thousands of children who spend time at these locations.

Ohio EPA is just one partner in helping to achieve the important goals under H2Ohio and, collectively, we have an exciting story to tell not only about our accomplishments to date, but also in what lies ahead for even more projects that will improve water quality, support our communities, and improve the quality of life for people.

We know it's important to tell this story, and to be transparent in how we are administering H2Ohio dollars. To this end, I am very excited to unveil Ohio EPA's interactive storyboard and map of water infrastructure projects funded through H2Ohio. The map can be accessed at this [link](#), and illustrates the statewide impact of the H2Ohio dollars invested to date. This online map and storyboard provide a more visually interesting and dynamic format for stakeholders and citizens to learn more and stay informed about the progress of our H2Ohio projects.

Today's testimony has been focused on our first two years of H2Ohio accomplishments. On October 15 of this year, Governor DeWine announced the water and wastewater infrastructure grant awards for Year 3 of H2Ohio, which will support infrastructure projects in Darke, Washington, Ross, Noble, Harrison, Hancock, Lawrence, and Adams Counties.

I am very proud that Ohio EPA is a partner in this initiative. Thank you again for inviting us here today and for the opportunity to share how we are putting H2Ohio dollars to work across the state. I am happy to answer any questions you have.