



Senate Finance Committee

Testimony of Dorothy Pelanda, Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture

House Bill 110 – H2Ohio Provisions

April 15, 2021

Chairman Dolan, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer remarks on the H2Ohio provisions of House Bill 110 alongside my friends and colleagues today.

Through the passage of the Main Operating Budget in the 133rd General Assembly, the seeds for H2Ohio were planted. In the ensuing months that have transpired, this bold initiative has been tended to with exceptional care. H2Ohio has now come to fruition and exceeded our expectations. This has been made possible through tireless work from the Administration and from you – our partners on the legislative side who have shown your commitment to the program. Above all, it has happened due to overwhelming interest from Ohio's agricultural community.

It is my pleasure to report that, under ODA's jurisdiction of the H2Ohio Initiative, 1.1 million acres of Ohio's cropland have been enrolled in the program in 14 counties of the Maumee River Watershed. In February, ODA began sending payments to the producers who are implementing the seven Best Management Practices (BMPs). These practices are proven to reduce phosphorus runoff and prevent algal blooms. With 44% of the cropland in the Maumee River Watershed enrolled, we have projected a phosphorus load reduction of approximately 10% or 206,000 pounds of phosphorus.

We also recognize how important House Bill 7 is to the H2Ohio effort – passed late last year by the General Assembly and incorporating the significant provisions of Senate Bill 2, which served as its companion legislation. HB 7 creates a statewide watershed planning and management program with the goal of improving and protecting these areas as it pertains to water quality. ODA is tasked with hiring a coordinator in each of these seven watersheds, with specific experience and qualifications. We have developed a detailed plan and timeline to accomplish this. The work is already in motion and we are thankful to the Legislature for their diligent work with HB 7 and the H2Ohio Initiative as a whole.

The proposed budget expands the number of counties participating in H2Ohio from 14 to 24 as we look to take this initiative statewide in the coming years. Simply put, H2Ohio is a success story and we are just beginning to see the long term, positive effects it will have on water quality in our state.

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I appreciate your attention to my testimony, and I look forward to addressing any questions that you may have following the remarks of Directors Stevenson and Mertz. Thank you.

