



*Members:*

*Douglas A. Spencer*

*John N. Bergman*

*Don Regula*

*Board of County Commissioners*

*209 S. Blackhoof St. - Room 201*

*Wapakoneta, Ohio 45895-1972*

*Phone: 419-739-6710 Fax: 419-739-6711*

*e-mail: commissioners@auglaizecounty.org*

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee, I am Doug Spencer, Auglaize County Commissioner. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 643.

For nearly four years, I have served as a co-chair of the CCAO Water Quality Task Force. The task force was created in response to Ohio's water quality challenges—from Lake Erie's Western Basin to Grand Lake St. Marys in my home county. The task force brings together both urban and rural commissioners to study Ohio's water quality challenges and explore potential solutions. Since convening, the task force has traveled across the state, meeting with industry and regulatory leaders to see firsthand the steps being taken to improve water quality in Ohio.

With Ohio agreeing to reduce phosphorus loading into Lake Erie's Western Basin by 40% by 2025, Ohio must take steps to ensure this benchmark is met. House Bill 643 is a positive step toward achieving the needed phosphorus reductions and creating a healthier Lake Erie.

Specifically, the bill provides an additional \$3.5 million for soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) located within the Western Lake Erie Basin. These funds will be directed toward additional soil testing, nutrient management plan development, manure conversion technologies, enhanced filter strips and other conservation support. CCAO has long supported additional state resources for SWCD operations.

Additionally, the bill provides up to \$10 million in capital funds to reduce open lake disposal of dredged materials. The bill also provides up to \$20 million in capital funds for the Ohio Department of Agriculture to establish programs to reduce phosphorus loading. The programs shall include purchasing equipment for subsoil placement of nutrients, nutrient placement equipment with GIS and variable rate technology capabilities, manure conversion technology, water management efforts, and additional monitoring equipment in tributaries and edge of field drainage structures.

Finally, the bill provides over \$2.65 million in capital funding for additional water quality monitoring infrastructure at Ohio Sea Grant/OSU Stone Laboratory. Having additional data and research available from which to measure progress is crucial as we track the effects of water quality improvement efforts in the months and years to come.

As the task force and many others have concluded, Ohio's water quality challenges are complex. The challenges will require resources on the ground to produce improved outcomes. HB 643 is an important investment in the tools, technology, and manpower needed to address these challenges.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.