

**Senate Finance Committee
Proponent Testimony
S.B. 266**

**Josh Knights, The Nature Conservancy in Ohio
March 1, 2018**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I am Josh Knights, the Executive Director for The Nature Conservancy in Ohio. I am pleased to testify at today's hearing in support of S.B. 266, the capital appropriations bill.

The Nature Conservancy is a non-partisan, science-based organization that seeks to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We are the world's leading conservation organization with Chapters in all 50 states and projects in 72 countries. Established in Ohio in 1959, we work collaboratively with businesses, farmers, sportsmen groups, government, and local communities to develop pragmatic, market-based solutions to conservation challenges. More than 70,000 Ohioans are supporters.

Today, I am here to simply thank you for three appropriations in S.B. 266 that represent meaningful investments in the natural resources that all Ohioans enjoy.

- **Clean Ohio Fund** – We are extremely grateful for the continuing support of the Administration and General Assembly for the Clean Ohio Fund, and sincerely appreciate the appropriation of \$100 million over the biennium to continue this widely-used and popular program. As you know, the Clean Ohio Fund is a competitive match program that provides grants to support the protection of green space, the preservation of farmland, and the construction of multi-use trails. All 88 counties have benefited from the program.
- **Healthy Lake Erie Fund** – Thank you for allocating \$10 million to this program to help address nutrient discharges and improve water quality in our Great Lake. Lake Erie supports an annual tourism economy of roughly \$12 billion and many local communities depend on it for their livelihoods. This investment will continue the commitment by the Administration and the General Assembly to make the lake a source of abundance for all.
- **Grand River Conservation Campus in Ashtabula County** – We greatly appreciate an appropriation for \$385,000 to provide overdue structural improvements at The Nature Conservancy's Grand River Conservation Campus in Ashtabula County. These funds will ensure adequate safety and access for students from local middle schools who are using the campus and the newly opened nature center there. They will also allow us to develop a field research station for visiting students from Lake Erie College in Painesville. Our goal is to educate and motivate the next generation of conservation leaders who will inherit the natural resources we leave behind.

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy's trustees and supporters, thank you so much for your leadership on these appropriations. Conservation benefits all of us, no matter if you live, work or visit this beautiful state. We greatly appreciate your actions on behalf of current and future Ohioans.