**House State and Local Government Committee**

**Testimony on Senate Bill 123**

**Provided by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources**

**June 12, 2019**

Good afternoon Chairman Wiggam, Ranking Member Kelly and Members of the House State and Local Government Committee. My name is Mike Angle and I am the State Geologist with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Division of Geological Survey. Joining me today is Mark Peter, who serves as the Department’s paleontologist. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide testimony today on Senate Bill 123.

SB 123 represents a great idea. *Dunkleosteus terrelli* is one of Ohio’s best-known fossils and has captured the minds and imaginations of scientists, hobbyists, and school children for decades. Fossils are a great way to connect with children and adults, and to introduce them to geology, biology, and natural history. People’s interest in prehistoric animals commonly gravitates towards apex predators such as *T. rex* dinosaurs, sabre-toothed tigers, and "*Megalodon"* sharks. *Dunkleosteus terrelli* is the epitome of the Devonian apex predators. Numerous specimens of this fish have been found in the Devonian-age Ohio Shale, which extends from south of Chillicothe, north to Cleveland, and then east to Ashtabula. Several specimens were collected in the Cleveland area and are a popular display at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. *Dunkleosteus* may also be viewed at the Rocky River Reservation Nature Center, Highbanks Metro Park in Delaware County, the Orton Museum at The Ohio State University, and at ODNR. Although other finds have been made elsewhere in North America and Europe, the Ohio fossils were among the first-described, most numerous, and best-known representatives of this exciting group of fish.

During the Late Devonian Period (359-382 million years ago), much of what is now eastern and central Ohio was overlain by a deep and narrow sea. The sea was laden with nutrients and fish, and other sea life thrived. The Devonian Period is referred to as the “Age of Fishes,” when fishes diversified and became more abundant. As fish died and sank to the ocean floor, many fossils were preserved for us to find today. *Dunkleosteus terrelli* was one of the larger members of the *Dunkleosteus* genus and may have grown to more than 20 feet long and weighed up to 4 tons. Imagine a fish the size of a great white shark, heavily armored, with the attitude of a piranha. Its bite could generate up to 80,000 pounds per square inch of pressure. Many specimens show scars from wounds, evidence of their aggressive nature.

In addition to our written testimony, we have provided a few exhibits relating to *Dunkleosteus terrelli* in order to give you a better idea of why this fish would be a deserving state symbol. These include a copy of *Fossils of Ohio*, the *Ohio Rocks!* children's activity book, a large poster, a plush toy, and a cast replica of a lower jaw fossil.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you again for giving Mark and me the opportunity to testify on this bill. ODNR believes that SB 123 is a great vehicle to engage Ohioans of all ages, but especially school children, in Ohio’s rich geologic history. We would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.