



## **Senate Finance Committee**

**12/8/2020**

### **HB 7**

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Joseph Pheil and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Rural Water Association (ORWA). Thank you for allowing me to provide written comments in support of HB 7.

Since 1976 ORWA has been an advocate and provider of on-site technical assistance for rural communities with water and wastewater systems throughout Ohio. Today, we continue to expand our membership and the base of benefits we provide to our members. Our system members provide water and/or wastewater services to approximately 2.01 million Ohioans.

ORWA would like to thank this body and the DeWine Administration for their commitment to improving water quality in Ohio through the H2Ohio program in the main operating budget (HB 166). The H2Ohio program is a great first step to addressing the needs this state faces in protecting Ohio's greatest resource, its water. Nevertheless, a long-term funding mechanism is necessary. We applaud Representatives Ghanbari and Patterson for their innovative approach in HB 7. The H2Ohio Trust Fund will be able to provide the financial support needed to fund water resource projects and will help ensure a dedicated funding source is available long into the future.

ORWA takes great pride in the investments we have made in underserved, rural communities. A few of our programs/services include:

- Providing technical assistance including preventative maintenance and training on proper operating procedures.
- Smoke testing sewer systems to identify and reduce infiltration and inflow that could lead to system overflows going into water ways.
- Establishing source water protection plans that help communities understand the threats and how to best protect their water supply.
- Provide energy efficiency assessments that help reduce operating costs and improve financial stability.
- Offer training on changes and updates to regulations and compliance requirements.

Despite our best efforts, additional funding is needed for systems to make necessary improvements. The H2Ohio initiative, along with the funding mechanism in HB 7, will be a significant step towards addressing these needs.

Again, I would like to thank Representatives Ghanbari and Patterson for their work on HB 7 as well as this body's commitment to improving water quality in Ohio. Please view ORWA as a resource to addressing these challenges moving forward.

Sincerely,

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