



**Before the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
House Bill 43 – Banning Oil & Gas Drilling Under Lake Erie
Sponsor Testimony by Representative Michael J. Skindell
Wednesday, March 29, 2023**

Chairman Kick, Vice Chair Lear, Ranking Member Rogers and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 43. This legislation codifies in Ohio law a ban on the taking or removing of oil or natural gas from under the bed of Lake Erie. The ban ensures that one of our state's greatest assets is thoroughly protected from the potential dangers of drilling for oil and natural gas.

The 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is one of many accidents that have happened while drilling for oil and natural gas. The effects of even a small-scale accident like this in Lake Erie would be devastating for our state. In addition to the environmental damage, the state would see lost revenue of a great magnitude and many lost jobs. The cost of clean-up would be a great burden for the federal, state, and local governments, as well as the citizens they represent.

Lake Erie is a vital part of our state and its impact is felt beyond just the Northeast Ohio area. The lake provides a great ecosystem which drives millions of dollars in tourism, fishing, shipping and agriculture. It is estimated that tourism alone brings in around \$430 million in state tax revenue. Therefore, it is essential to protect this state treasure from potentially disastrous conditions.

Although Congress enacted legislation at the federal level to ban this practice in the Great Lakes in 2005, the law is constantly under attack by critics. Legislation banning drilling under Lake Erie at the state level is, therefore, essential to ensure this environmental protection.

Current law authorizes the Director of Natural Resources, with the approval of the Director of Environmental Protection, the Attorney General and the Governor, subject to certain requirements, to issue permits and create leases to parties applying for permission to take and remove sand, gravel, stone, and other minerals or substances from and under the bed of Lake Erie. This bill would create an exception to this authority by prohibiting the Director of Natural Resources from issuing any permit or making any lease to take or remove oil or natural gas from or under the bed of Lake Erie.

This bill puts an essential and necessary safeguard in place to protect Lake Erie. Chairman Kick, Vice Chair Lear, Ranking Member Rogers and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for your consideration of House Bill 43. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.