

To: Chairman Edwards, Vice Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Members of the House Finance Committee

From: Matt Misicka, Executive Director
Ohio Conservation Federation

Date: 20 April, 2023



Re: Opponent Testimony re: Changes to Division of Wildlife Budget and Authority (HSB 33)

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Members of the Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Conservation Federation and the thousands of Ohio sportsmen and women we represent, I am writing today to voice the *strongest possible level of opposition* in the substitute budget bill to the funding and authority of the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

Ohio's sportsmen and women oppose the elimination of \$2.5M for Conservation and Habitat Protection. This complete reduction of a modest funding request directly hurts opportunities and access for hunters, anglers and trappers in Ohio and must be restored; and

We oppose the reduction from a proposed \$2M for Project Wild-based education to a meager \$125K. Project Wild provides a proven platform that educates Ohio's youth on the value of conservation and supports fulfillment of State Science standards. Ohio succeeds when its kids succeed in school; and

We oppose any reduction to the authority currently provided the Division of Wildlife and its Wildlife Officers that negatively impacts their ability to protect our game species and our uniquely American sporting heritage. Violations of hunting, fishing, and trapping laws, the protection of the state's game species, and the safety of our sportsmen, women and youth are of a very temporal nature that must be addressed with immediacy. The proposed changes, including those that impede a Wildlife Officer's ability to enter private property without a warrant, will negatively impact all law-abiding citizens of Ohio as well as the state's precious wildlife that is held in the public-trust; and

We oppose changing the start date of the opening of deer gun season from the first Monday after Thanksgiving to the Friday after Thanksgiving. A survey conducted as recently as 2020 is evidence that this is not desired by the vast majority of Ohio's deer gun hunters as it interferes with family events surrounding the Thanksgiving holiday. Any suggestion that there might be any significant increase in revenue by opening the gun season earlier is highly unlikely and should never be a reason to change the dates.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Ohio's sportsmen and women encourage you to take the recommendations of the hunting, angling, and trapping community into consideration during your deliberations. If I can be of any further assistance or answer any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Matthew A. Misicka, Executive Director
Ohio Conservation Federation

