



Testimony of Cleveland Water Alliance
Senate Finance Committee
May 30, 2023

Good afternoon, Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Bryan Stubbs, and I am the Executive Director and President of the Cleveland Water Alliance (CWA). Although Cleveland is in our name, we are a statewide organization focused on what is known as the “blue economy” or “water economy” — the concept that water has significant economic value. Our organization supports businesses that use water, utilities that treat water, state research institutions, and global companies creating cutting-edge technology.

As a non-profit economic development organization, we bring together research, industry, and utility partners to enhance the Great Lakes region's water economy, which includes all of Ohio’s watersheds as well as the Ohio River.

Last budget cycle, the State of Ohio invested in our work on the heels of receiving an incredibly competitive national USEDA grant where we were one of only seven organizations and the only freshwater-focused organization to receive funding. I’d like to spend a minute today talking about how we’ve put the funds received to use as well as share our roadmap in making Ohio a top tier destination for innovation in the water economy.

Prior state funding has been incredibly impactful for our work. Thanks to this funding from last biennium, the Lake Erie Watershed is now the largest digitally connected freshwater body in the world. Practically speaking, this means that we created a telecommunications network covering more than 6,000 square miles so that data sensors on bridges, buoys and along the coast transmit data in real time. Why was this necessary? With this infrastructure, utilities and municipalities have access to an early-warning system for a harmful algal bloom before it becomes a major concern for our drinking water, can assess whether beach conditions are safe for recreation, or can provide real-time information to rescue operations.

With this infrastructure built out, companies from all over the world are choosing Ohio to demonstrate, validate, and pilot their freshwater solutions and technologies via this world-class water accelerator “testbed.” An asset of this caliber – allowing water innovation companies the to test their technology in a variety of ‘real-world’ conditions – does not exist anywhere else in the world. If funded, our request in this year’s budget would expand these digital assets into the Ohio River valley with our partner, ORSANCO-the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission.



In addition to the internet connectivity we've built over Lake Erie, our other testbed funded with state funding includes a 'pipe farm' in Parma, Ohio where innovators are trialing technologies to identify lead service lines without breaking ground. Why is this important? This innovation is critical as every municipality and utility works to follow the federal Lead Service Line replacement mandates to ensure that everyone has access to clean, safe drinking water.

The next phase in our testbed expansion includes establishing an industrial testbed that aims to monitor the use of water-intensive companies, inviting a sustainable attraction of water-using industries to the region: such as advanced manufacturing, metal fabrication, chemical, coatings, food processing, servers and more. This will allow us to trial exciting industrial technology, as well as ensure our freshwater resources are monitored as companies look to our region to relocate from water-scarce environments. We were consulted on the Intel project regarding water use, for example.

The momentum at this moment in time is one of urgency as we have a real chance to establish Ohio as the freshwater capital of the world. Our reputation as a valuable destination for innovative water technology is growing at lightning speed. Over the last two years we've watched Lake Erie and the Great Lakes region become a globally recognized place to do business within the water economy. We've been invited to attend and speak at more than 30 conferences in 2022, including events in Germany, France, Spain, Canada, the Netherlands, and South Korea, which have generated hundreds of business leads from around the world. These companies are interested in piloting technologies, connecting with manufacturers, or establishing new US-based offices.

Finally, we've deployed nearly 50 technologies from over a dozen countries thus far and have a waitlist of more than 30 companies – from start-ups to multimillion dollar corporations - to utilize our testbeds this year. We have also secured a technology pilot from an overseas partner, Techwin, that would significantly mitigate supply-chain issues for utilities. It is estimated that the global "smart water management" market will exceed \$23 billion by 2027, and we want Ohio to be at the forefront of such an opportunity. Therefore, we are requesting \$3m each fiscal year for the Cleveland Water Alliance Sustainable Water Technologies Initiative. Thank you for your time today and for your consideration of further funding the water economy. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.