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LD 2141

The introduction of LD 2141, as proposed by Tavis Hasenfus, a respected former FOCW board member and current Advisory Council member, marks a pivotal opportunity for our state to address the growing threats AIS pose to our biodiversity, water quality, and recreational activities. Aquatic invasive species disrupt our ecosystems, hinder economic growth, and pose significant challenges to the conservation of our natural resources.

The proposed funding is not merely an expenditure; it is an investment in the health and sustainability of our water bodies and the broader ecosystem. By supporting the DEP's efforts in AIS management, this legislation will enable more robust and effective strategies to combat the spread of invasive species, safeguarding our environment for future generations.

Our collective experience and ongoing work in lake and watershed associations underscore the critical need for such funding. We have witnessed firsthand the challenges AIS present and the extensive resources required to manage these threats effectively. The allocation of \$2 million would significantly enhance our capabilities to mitigate these impacts, ensuring our lakes, rivers, and watersheds remain vibrant and healthy.

In preparation for this testimony, discussions with a small group of lake and watershed associations revealed a shared optimism about the committee's recognition of the urgent need for this legislation. We understand that the decision to advance LD 2141 to the Appropriations Committee is pending, and we earnestly urge you to support this bill. The funding and additional study recommendations included in LD 2141 are indispensable to our ongoing efforts to preserve our state's natural beauty and ecological integrity.

We appreciate your consideration of our support for LD 2141 and look forward to the opportunity to further contribute to the conservation and management of our state's precious water resources. Together, we can ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for all residents and wildlife that depend on these ecosystems.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued commitment to the environmental well-being of our state.