

CONGRESSWOMAN MARCY KAPTUR
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior Members Day
Testimony In support of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
March 25, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Simpson, and Ranking Member Pingree for affording me this opportunity to testify before your Interior Subcommittee today. I have served on this subcommittee with both of you in the past and truly enjoyed working together to address the vital topics in your jurisdiction.

Freshwater is life. I come before you today as Co-Chair of House Great Lakes Task Force to support reasonable funding for a very important, successful and popular program across our Great Lakes region — the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). For the largest body of freshwater on Earth, GLRI is life-giving across the vast area I represent and call home.

Just cleaning up the Black River in Lorain, Ohio took efforts beginning in the 1980's, early in my Congressional career, that were accelerated by GLRI, and finally completed just last year, in 2024. This success has yielded one of the best walleye fishing areas in Lake Erie. That says a lot as Lake Erie is the largest fisheries in our Great Lakes. Already anglers with fishing poles and decked out in waders

up to their shoulders are waist deep in the cold water of the Maumee River that slices through our district. It is a river that needs our continued attention as it drains the largest watershed and manure shed in the entire Great Lakes.

GLRI's work to remediate the infractions of prior generations is essential. As House Co-Chair of the bipartisan Great Lakes task force, and a senior member of the Committee on Appropriations, funding the GLRI is among my highest priorities. When I was a child, our immigrant grandmother — Teofila, which translates to “daughter of God” — a hard-working farm girl from Central Europe — would take me for walks along the Maumee River. She would scoop up a handful of dirty water showing it to me and say: “someday America will pay a great price for this disrespect of Mother Earth.” How spot on she was.

The GLRI Act of 2025 is bipartisan legislation that will re-authorize the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative for another five years through FY 2031. The bill increases funding that benefits our communities and the more than 40 million people that draw their fresh water from our Lakes. It is vital to maintaining and sustaining our communities for generations to come as population in our

nation approaches 350 million. We cannot behave as though it is 1900.

Vice President Vance hails from my home state of Ohio, he served as Senate Co-Chair of the Great Lakes Task Force for the past two years and was a sponsor of the GLRI Act. It is my sincere hope that his experience will help the new Administration understand the importance of this funding. We hail from America's freshwater Kingdom, comprising 20% of the fresh water on earth. I believe the President himself appreciates the incalculable value of freshwater for our nation and continent.

GLRI seeks to restore the Great Lakes ecosystem. Doing so enhances the economic health of our region, but also improves public health as well as that of nature's critters like bald eagles and trumpet or swans that choose our region as home. When I was first elected, there was just one pair of nesting eagles left on Lake Erie today after decades of effort, there are nearly 100 pairs.

GLRI funds remove very toxic legacy pollution like beryllium to achieve freshwater quality and habitat restoration. It is critical in reducing the spread of harmful invasive species through, including preventing the destructive invasive carp that are moving up the

Mississippi River, and seriously threatens our Great Lakes \$7 Billion fishery and \$16 Billion boating industry.

The GLRI also funds so much of the work to mitigate the harmful algal blooms occurring throughout our Great Lakes. In 2014 those horrid blooms got into the freshwater system of my hometown of Toledo and the water was shut off for three days to customers in Ohio and Michigan. The crisis was surreal, but it reminded us of Mother Nature's power over us. With the help of our bipartisan members of the Great Lakes Task Force, we've been able to protect and even slowly make Improvements.

But I will remind you that GLRI was designed to be a supplemental program. Without solid base funding to the EPA the GLRI cannot be effective.

My hope is that the bipartisan House Appropriations committee will work with the Trump Administration to appropriately fund programs like GLRI that provide jobs, recreational opportunities, economic development, and most importantly, preserves clean drinking water for the millions who depend on them.

Over 80% of Midwesterners support the GLRI and it regularly passes the House and Senate in overwhelming bipartisan fashion, one of the rare programs that do. Everyone can agree because it is just good common sense to protect our most important natural asset, fresh water, which is the basis of life itself.

Thank you, Chairman Simpson, and ranking member Pingree for allowing me to present this request before you today and I yield back.