

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF

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**BEFORE THE HOUSE ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, MANUFACTURING, AND CRITICAL
MATERIALS**

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Washington, D.C.

Good morning, Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Tonko and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to share the state of Ohio's work to restore East Palestine.

It has been more than six weeks since Governor DeWine asked me to represent him overseeing Ohio EPA's response to East Palestine following the February 3 train derailment.

Again, I want to thank you for the opportunity to highlight some of the work that the Ohio EPA team is doing to make sure that East Palestine can get back to life as it was before the traumatic days of early February -- the goal that Governor DeWine laid out before the U.S. Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee last Wednesday.

Ohio EPA's priority is to oversee the removal of contaminated soil and water from East Palestine. We expect this work to continue for at least two more months, as the railroad removes contaminated soil from under the tracks and works to restore the creeks. The investigation phase is also underway, which will guide long-term remediation plans.

To be fully protective of human health and the environment now and into the future, we are doing the following:

- Testing the municipal water supply on a weekly basis -- we will be taking our 8th round of weekly samples yet today. We also test four sentinel wells that are located between the contaminated creeks and the municipal wellfields and additional sentinel wells strategically placed around town. Those test results have not shown any contamination related to the derailment.
- Installing and sampling monitoring wells at the site of the derailment, where the chemicals were spilled. We are testing for a broad range of volatile organic compounds and have not detected any contamination to groundwater beneath the tracks.

- Ohio EPA, together with our federal response partners, have been overseeing removal of the contaminated soil from beneath the tracks. We have not allowed the railroad to rebuild the tracks until we confirm, through multiple rounds of confirmation sampling, that the contaminated soil has been removed.
- USEPA has brought the most sophisticated technology available to continuously monitor and ensure that the air we are breathing is safe.
- In direct response to community feedback, we have undertaken a robust soil sampling effort. Lab results do not show any unsafe levels of contamination in lawns, gardens, or fields in the area.
- We are making progress in the removal of chemicals from Sulphur Run and Leslie Run – we know those creeks are contaminated, and we will keep testing until we know that the water is safe.
- To provide assurance to farmers – and to customers of farms in the area – the Ohio Department of Agriculture will be testing forage crops, grasses, and other agricultural products.
- The Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources have found no evidence of chemical-related deaths in any terrestrial animals.
- The steps we are taking right now to remove contamination are designed to ensure that there will NOT be prolonged chemical exposure to anyone in East Palestine.

A secondary, but extremely important function of the Governor's team in East Palestine is to be a reliable source of scientifically verifiable facts and information for the community.

I am proud that a large group of experts from Ohio EPA has voluntarily attended a town hall or open house every Thursday night for the past month where we are able to talk with people one-on-one, look at maps, share data and answer good questions.

Wes Vins and I attended a meeting at the East Palestine High School last week to hear the concerns of athletic directors and coaches from neighboring schools. They told us directly that confusion about the current condition of the air, water and soil in East Palestine has presented challenges in getting teams to participate in sporting events in East Palestine. We also hear concerns from businesses and farmers about cancelled orders and lost sales.

There are many excellent resources and data available on websites of the Ohio EPA, Ohio EMA, the USEPA, and the Columbiana County Health Department where anyone can find the current testing data, answers to frequently asked questions, regular updates about community events, and much more.

One theme of this committee hearing today is “transparency” – and as a key function of the State's response to the derailment, I can commit to East Palestine that Governor DeWine and his cabinet will

always tell you exactly what we know, what we don't know yet, and what we are doing to find answers for the Village of East Palestine.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts today, and I look forward to your questions.