



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 31, 2023

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Dan Tierney: 614-644-0957

Jill Del Greco: 614-644-0957

Governor DeWine's 2023 State of the State Address

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Governor Mike DeWine today delivered the 2023 State of the State address today in the House Chamber of the Ohio Statehouse. The remarks, as prepared, are as follows:

Speaker Stephens, President Huffman, Leader Antonio and Leader Russo, Members of the General Assembly, Chief Justice Kennedy and Justices of the Ohio Supreme Court, Elected State Officials, Lieutenant Governor Husted, My Fellow Citizens of Ohio....

We meet at a time of great opportunity for Ohio and its citizens.

Yet, it is also a time of great challenges.

Our future is bright -- but that future will be defined by how well we educate all our children and how we tear down the barriers to their success. We are challenged as never before, because at no time in our history has the full education of all our children been more important.

The budget that I will present to you later today reflects the moral imperative we have to see that ALL Ohioans are fully educated, and therefore, have the tools to live up to their full God-given potential.

Our budget is fiscally sound -- spending one-time money on one-time expenditures, averting a fiscal cliff in future years when this one-time money is gone.

It is a budget that focuses on our people, on our families, and on our children, for they are Ohio's greatest asset.

It reflects our obligation to make sure every Ohioan has the tools to succeed, to get a good job, to live their dreams, whatever they may be.

So, let us start with our children.

We know that reading unlocks the door for all future learning and provides a lifetime of opportunities. It opens the door to good jobs -- but really, it opens the door to life.

Reading can take what seems like a dark world and make it bright!

It can fire a child's imagination -- and turn what looks like a black and white world into vivid and bright colors!

But tragically, today 40 percent of all Ohio 3rd Grade students are not proficient in reading -- 40 percent!

So today, I am calling for a renewed focus on literacy -- and on the way we teach reading in the State of Ohio.

The jury has returned. The evidence is clear. The verdict is in.

There is a great deal of research about how we learn to read. And today, we understand the great value and importance of phonics. Not all literacy curriculums are created equal, and sadly, many Ohio students do not have access to the most effective reading curriculum.

In our budget, we are making sure that all Ohio children have access to curriculum that is aligned with the evidence-based approaches of the Science of Reading.

Our budget directs the Ohio Department of Education to lay out a plan -- informed by research and evidence -- to ensure that all Ohio students have the best opportunity to master the skill of reading.

Further, it directs them to help students in our public, STEM, and charter schools by providing funding to each school to pay for curriculum based on the Science of Reading and for professional development for those teachers needing it in that curriculum.

We know that the earlier a child is reading on grade level, the better that child will do in later grades -- and in life. We also know that what happens to a child before they start school determines their chances of success.

With your help in the past in efforts to reduce infant mortality and to improve maternal health, we have doubled the number of new and expectant moms participating in evidence-based home visiting, where trained professionals offer valuable help to moms. In our proposed budget, we will grow this program to serve nearly 10,000 additional families.

To further reduce infant mortality and help more mothers, our budget will also expand access to safe, stable housing for pregnant and new mothers.

Now, we know that a child's brain is 80 percent developed by the time they turn three, so these first years of growth are so very, very important. That is why introducing children to books as soon as they are born is vital to their development.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Members of the General Assembly -- thank you. Thank you for your continued support for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and at this time, I would like to introduce Fran -- my best friend and bride of over 55 years.

Fran told me just this morning that 51 percent of Ohio children from birth to age five are now enrolled in the in the Imagination Library, and that 366,401 Ohio kids are receiving a free book in the mail every single month. Not only that, since Fran became First Lady, more than 10 million books have been mailed to Ohio's children.

This General Assembly has helped by providing funding for the books and by connecting us with organizations and supporters in your districts who work with and serve children and families. I thank those local organizations, as well -- the United Way, public libraries, community foundations, hospitals, Head Start programs, pre-schools, and so many, many others -- who have also provided funding and helped with enrollment.

The Imagination Library is about helping families. We know that sometimes it's difficult to be a parent. What happens at home and how a child grows up impacts them more than really anything else. For Ohio to be the best state in the Nation to raise a family, we must do everything we can to better support families, and so our budget will do the following:

To ease the financial burden on new parents, our budget asks you to repeal the State's sales tax on critical infant supplies, things such as diapers, wipes, cribs, car seats, strollers, and safety equipment.

Further, I am also asking you to enact a \$2,500 per child state tax deduction!

Our budget will make available childcare for more working families.

Many Ohio parents must choose between taking on full-time, full-year work or staying unemployed or underemployed, because they cannot afford the high cost of childcare. Through our budget, 15,000 more Ohio children in working families will have access to high-quality childcare -- childcare that will help them start Kindergarten with the skills needed to succeed.

Next, we are going to make it easier for families to adopt children into safe, loving, permanent homes. Currently, children adopted through the public children services system have access to Medicaid coverage, but children adopted through private agencies do not -- EVEN if these children have complex medical needs. We know there are many families who would love to

open their homes to a child, including children with serious health needs, but cannot afford to do it.

In our budget, we will extend that same opportunity for health care coverage to ALL children who are adopted in the State of Ohio.

With your help, we have been transforming foster care. We created a Foster Youth Bill of Rights, and we established a statewide advocate for youth and families who independently investigates reports of abuse and misconduct within Ohio's foster care system.

I am also proud of our work to create the Children Services Transformation Advisory Council. Members of this Council traveled across the State to hear directly from those impacted by foster care, and they developed 37 separate recommendations to improve the system. I am very pleased to report that every single one of those recommendations has either been fully implemented or is in the process of being implemented.

We also must do more to help the families involved in the child welfare system.

Historically, the State has woefully underfunded our county children's services agencies. Working together in our last two budgets, we have more than doubled state funding for them. However, Ohio still remains near the bottom nationally for funding, and many of our children's services agencies continue to struggle.

To better support children, families, and the caseworkers who serve them, we will once again increase their funding in our new proposed budget.

There are other families in Ohio with vulnerable children who have unique needs, who -- up until now -- have had no place to go to seek help. They face challenges that many of us cannot even comprehend. We will help them, as well.

In our last budget, we created OhioRise -- a specialized program to help children with mental health challenges -- challenges that are so complex and so severe that these children are at risk of being unable to even stay in their homes with their parents. Families in this program are assigned a hands-on case manager -- someone with a small caseload -- who can provide individualized attention and help that family get the best possible care for their child.

OhioRise is now getting immediate care to over 16,000 Ohio children by helping communities develop new and intensive behavioral health services that are tailored to the specific needs of these children. Our budget will allow us to connect many more families to these desperately needed services.

OhioRise is also giving hope back to families.

In the words of one mother, "OhioRise has saved my son's life. He is smiling again. There is laughter in our home. And, my son is healing."

One of my first acts as Governor was to create the Governor's Children's Initiative. We made great progress by working collaboratively across agencies and breaking down silos to help children. But, we also quickly learned that the supports we provide Ohio children are strewn across departments, agencies, and offices, sometimes causing duplication and inefficiencies.

The issues impacting the lives of our children are simply too important to leave scattered throughout multiple agencies, without a member of the Governor's Cabinet driving them each and every day.

And so, in our budget, I am proposing the creation of a new Cabinet-level agency, called the "Department of Children and Youth."

This statewide agency will allow us to have a sharp focus on children's issues. Our proposed Department of Children and Youth Services will consolidate programs from six different state agencies and focus specifically on the following:

1. The physical health of mothers, infants, and children;
2. Children's behavioral health and the early identification of and intervention in mental health needs;
3. Kids in foster care; and
4. Early childhood education.

We are very excited about the prospect of this new Department and what it will mean for Ohio children and their families.

One of the things families never used to worry about was the safety of their children at school. Today, sadly, they do.

When I took office, our local schools were receiving very little help from the State for school safety. So, I created the Ohio School Safety Center, which is dedicated to helping schools, public and private, to address security needs -- from the physical security of their buildings, to training our school officials in threat assessment, to improving our schools' emergency response plans.

Each day, our experts at the School Safety Center are scanning social media for threats to our students. They are responding to calls to the anonymous tip line. And, they are working with our local officials on each district's unique safety needs.

Our proposed budget will allow us to continue and expand this vital work.

Further, some school officials have told me that they would like to place a School Resource Officer in their school, but simply cannot afford to do so. In this budget, we offer all schools - - again public and private -- who want a School Resource Officer, with additional state funding to help them do so.

We also want to do this because, oftentimes, there is a trust that gets built between students and the officer that would not otherwise occur -- but for that officer being in the school each day.

When kids feel safe at school, they are better able to learn. We want all students to attend schools where they're safe and have the resources they need to succeed, which is why our budget continues the implementation of the Cupp-Patterson school funding formula.

Now, children have unique needs, so we want families to have the opportunity to send their children to a school that best meets those needs. That is why our budget proposal includes an historic investment in the EdChoice scholarship program by expanding eligibility to families at or below 400 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. This investment will allow more families than ever to take advantage of this scholarship and find the best school for their children.

For some families, choice means a charter school, and we are continuing to expand choice for those families by increasing funding for high-quality charter schools. For students attending high-quality charter schools, our budget provides an additional \$3,000 for each economically disadvantaged student. It also increases the per-pupil facilities funding for all charter schools -- from \$500 to \$1000 per student.

Parents want their children to be healthy and happy and to find a passion -- something that they love to do -- something that allows them to live out their dreams -- whatever those dreams may be. Many Ohio families are seeing their children find that passion in their county career centers.

Lieutenant Governor Husted, Fran, and I have spent a lot of time recently visiting career tech centers across the State.

At the Medina County Career Center, I met students learning HVAC and construction trades, as well as those studying sports medicine and cybersecurity.

At the Fairfield County Workforce Center, I visited students and the manufacturers who are providing them jobs.

And, at the Tri Rivers Career Center in Marion, I talked with teachers who are teaching adults welding, industrial maintenance, and robotics.

When Fran and I and the Lieutenant Governor were visiting these career centers, we would talk to the teachers and the superintendents about the different programs they offer. We would ask about the number of students enrolled, and so often, the teachers would tell us that more kids want to take the courses, but there are waitlists because there simply aren't enough open spots.

In other cases, they told us they don't have the most modern, up-to-date equipment needed to teach certain courses.

We are going to change this!

To reach more students and to provide better training for 21st Century jobs, our budget will invest \$300 million of one-time funding for capital improvements and equipment for career tech education.

If a child's passion instead takes them to college, many families worry if they can afford it. And so, for the first time ever -- we will provide need-based financial aid to students choosing to enroll in community colleges or university regional campuses.

Our budget will also expand the State's need-based scholarship, known as Ohio College Opportunity Grants, in two very important ways.

First, we will significantly expand eligibility to include many more working Ohio families.

And second, we will increase the scholarship amount to \$6,000 per student, renewable for each of four years.

Further, to reward academic excellence, if you are in the top five percent of your high school graduating class -- wherever you go to high school in Ohio -- we plan to reward you with a \$5,000 a year scholarship, also renewable for each of four years, if you choose to attend a college or university here in Ohio.

WORKFORCE/JOBS/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We want our children to grow, learn, and ultimately live and work right here in Ohio! And we believe the changes we have announced today will help them do that. Keeping our young people in Ohio has never been more important, as we create jobs faster than we can fill them.

Now, I want to take a moment to recognize my friend and partner in moving Ohio forward -- Lieutenant Governor Jon Husted.

Jon has focused relentlessly on growing our workforce and on economic development. Since the Intel announcement just a year ago, we've celebrated groundbreaking, expansions, and investments all over the State:

Smucker's announced plans for a new research and development facility in Orville!

Abbott chose Bowling Green for the site of its new powder formula facility!

And Medpace is expanding its healthcare research work in Cincinnati!

Ohio, which has a rich history in automotives, has also become an emerging force in electric vehicle and EV parts manufacturing.

Ford chose Avon Lake for the assembly of its all-new commercial electric vehicle.

General Motors selected Toledo for its first electric vehicle propulsion plant in the United States.

And Honda -- with whom Ohio's partnership stretches back 40 years -- chose Fayette County for its brand-new EV battery plant!

There is no question -- Ohio is on the move!

In the last four years, 48 companies left the East and West Coasts for Ohio, creating more than 14,000 new jobs, \$1.1 billion in new Ohio payroll, and \$24.9 billion in new capital investment.

While we have had so many successes and everyone is excited about Intel, I have heard from a lot of people outside of Central Ohio who ask, "What about us?"

One of the reasons Intel is locating in Licking County is because the site was one of few in the State that could handle an economic development project of that magnitude. We simply don't have enough shovel-ready, development-ready sites for the kind of calls we are getting from companies all over the world.

If a manufacturer calls and says, "We need 400 acres with roads, water, gas, and electricity," we need to have sites immediately available to show them NOW.

We want ALL regions of the State to participate in Ohio's economic revival -- and for all Ohioans to prosper from it. Every region of the State has good sites, however, many of them are not yet ready for development.

When a business is looking for a site, they want to move quickly, and so we must get these sites ready so that we can capture these jobs in every part of the State.

As President Ronald Reagan once said, "America is too great for small dreams." Well, my friends, so is Ohio!

And that is why our budget creates the "All Ohio Future Fund" -- a one-time investment that will provide a lifetime of returns! We will make an unprecedented \$2.5 billion investment to prepare the infrastructure of large economic development sites located in every single part of Ohio. With the development of these sites, every single Ohio citizen will be within commuting distance of at least one of these sites.

Innovation is in our blood! And with your help, we now have thriving Innovation Districts in Cincinnati, Columbus, and Cleveland. They partner businesses with our colleges and universities to develop new STEM education talent, create tens of thousands of jobs, and bring about new research, extraordinary technology, and life-saving medical advancements.

In our budget, we will invest an additional \$150 million to create new Innovation Hubs in regions throughout the State. These hubs will bring together each community's strengths to encourage more economic development and attract the very best talent.

MENTAL HEALTH

For the past year, I have talked a lot about mental health, but there was a time when no one wanted to talk about it -- a time when it was easier to simply look the other way.

My Fellow Ohioans -- That time is over!

Each of us knows someone who is struggling. Maybe you have a friend who is depressed or anxious about the future.

Maybe your brother or sister has schizophrenia, but you've never told your friends because you're too embarrassed.

Maybe your mom or dad has an addiction to alcohol or opioids and can no longer hold a job.

Maybe your child has bi-polar disorder and has contemplated suicide.

Or, maybe you, yourself, have.

Thankfully, more people today are starting to talk more openly about these issues, just as Bengals tight end, Hayden Hurst, is doing by sharing publicly his own mental health struggles - and also through education campaigns, like our public-private partnership, to create the "Beat the Stigma" commercials, which have now been seen by nearly 90 percent of Ohioans.

As author and civil rights activist James Baldwin once said, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed unless it is faced." And so, we must face the fact that no Ohioan will ever fully live up to their potential or be able to lead purposeful and meaningful lives if their mental illness remains in the shadows and untreated.

Despite the good intentions of the past, our country has never fully built a community mental health system. Sixty years ago, President John F. Kennedy signed the Community Mental Health Act of 1963 -- releasing thousands of women and men with mental illness from psychiatric hospitals. The promise then was that a system of care would be built so that these men and women, and others with untreated mental illness, would live with dignity and receive treatment in their own communities.

That promise was never fully kept -- not nationally, nor in Ohio -- and the community system of care was never fully built. But, with your help we have started to make progress.

Since the time I took office -- beginning with the Student Wellness and Success dollars for schools right up to the additional resources you provided in the recent lame duck session -- we are tackling things head on!

Yet, there remains so much more to do.

The budget I am releasing later today is centered on:

1. Building a community care system that increases prevention efforts;
2. Offering better crisis response services and treatment options;
3. Growing our behavioral health workforce; and
4. Focusing on much-needed research and innovation.

In this budget, you will see growing investments to expand what's working -- to all 88 counties, including:

Treatment and counseling services delivered either in person or through telehealth visits to people directly in their homes and workplaces.

Suicide prevention to end the needless loss of our brothers and sisters.

Support for our youngest Ohioans, so they can have a great start to life and get help at the earliest sign of a behavioral health need.

Expansion of the crisis care system and the new 9-8-8 hotline so fewer Ohioans land in the emergency room.

And, increased access to state hospitals and private psychiatric hospitals to ease stress on families, emergency departments, courts, and jails.

Further, we are proposing a one-time investment to expand the capacity of our pediatric behavioral health care system to address the shortage of behavioral health professionals serving children -- and to expand critical facilities.

Now, while many families are getting good results from what's currently available, others languish. And so, we must do more.

We must not accept that mental illness and addiction are inevitable.

Or that some of these illnesses can't be prevented.

Or that we have advanced treatment as far as it will go.

Or that recovery is only for the few and the lucky.

None of these things are true.

What instead is true is that Ohioans know how to impact change. Ohioans don't wait for others to solve our problems. That's not who we are. It's not in our DNA.

What IS in our DNA is a great passion for and history of research and innovation! From the Wright Brothers taking the lead on flight research to Albert Sabin developing the life-saving oral Polio vaccine -- when we have a problem, we figure out solutions -- and then the rest of the world FOLLOWS Ohio!

As we look toward how we continue to address the mental health and addiction challenges of our citizens and families, I am reminded of something Desmond Tutu once said. He said that “there comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.”

To make meaningful change, we must figure out why so many of our fellow Ohioans keep falling into that proverbial river and finally get to the root causes of mental illness and addiction.

We must engage the best and brightest minds in Ohio to focus on what’s really holding Ohio families and communities back. In doing so, our budget will approach mental health care more holistically. For the truth is -- from research to treatment to understanding the biological, cultural, and situational aspects of mental illness -- we have not, to this point, brought things together in a cohesive way.

This work will involve a coordinated, comprehensive investment in new innovations to achieve better outcomes and will recognize that what works for one person in one community may not work for everyone, everywhere in Ohio.

And so, Members of the General Assembly, I ask you to join me in creating the “State of Ohio Action for Resiliency Network” or the SOAR Network.

This effort will harness the talent of our citizens to deploy a first-of-its-kind, comprehensive, multi-year research study that includes Ohioans from ALL regions of our state. This, and other research opportunities, will help us launch new discoveries about the brain and about resilience.

It will help us understand the unique nature of mental health issues across Ohio’s urban, suburban, rural, and Appalachian communities to better determine which interventions work best in our many diverse communities.

It will look at individuals, but it will also take a multi-generational view of how those individuals fit into a family and into a community.

It will include an interdisciplinary research team of counselors, social workers, sociologists, nurses, psychologists, and medical doctors from across our State. They will work collectively to determine which counseling or other support programs in the community can best improve resiliency, so Ohioans can remain effectively engaged in school, in the workplace, in their community and -- most importantly -- in their own home, with their own family.

It will help us support our most vulnerable citizens, by figuring out how to most effectively reduce the risk of suicide, addiction, and overdose and by investing in additional evidence-based initiatives that we know work.

And finally, as these great minds develop new ways of preventing and treating mental health conditions, we will train Ohio's behavioral health workforce in cutting edge therapies, and we will put this research into practice -- in real time -- in all corners of the State of Ohio.

We will do these things, because they keep Ohioans working and our state thriving. But we will also do them, because it is simply the right thing to do.

HOUSING

Too many Ohio families lack adequate and affordable housing.

In recent years, we have experienced lower rates of housing construction and low vacancy rates in rental properties. This has put a strain on our housing market, especially affecting Ohioans with low and moderate incomes.

We started a housing conversation last year in the waning days of the legislative session. And at that time, I pledged to the people of Ohio that we would address the issue of housing holistically.

To encourage the development of housing for lower-income families, help more Ohioans achieve the dream of homeownership, and continue the revitalization of our downtowns and historic communities, I am proposing in my budget a series of tax changes and programs.

For the first time ever, we will create both state "Low Income Housing Tax Credits" and "Single Family Housing Tax Credits" to stimulate the construction of more housing for families.

And, we will create an "Ohio Home Ownership Savings Account" program with Treasurer of State Sprague to allow Ohioans to save for down payments and other qualified housing expenses with reduced state tax consequences.

NURSING HOMES

Virtually every Ohio family has a family member or knows someone living in a nursing home.

Today, Ohio has over 960 nursing homes. Most of them are very good, with many wonderful and compassionate workers caring for the residents -- and we are grateful for their work.

But tragically, nursing home horror stories happen in every part of our State. I have received gut-wrenching letters from families begging for help.

Oftentimes, these are preventable tragedies caused by systemic problems in the nursing home, including poor infection prevention and control, medication errors, failure to provide care, and sometimes elder abuse.

Sadly, Ohio ranks 39th as a state in the most recent CMS overall Quality Star Ratings.

And, disturbingly, when we look at the record, too many of the facilities in Ohio have very inconsistent compliance with standards of care -- going up and then going down, repeating and correcting the same deficiencies over and over and over again.

We know that the General Assembly will be looking at the rebasing system this year, and we look forward to working with all of you and with our nursing homes to make sure that nursing homes are adequately funded.

But, any discussion about rebasing will also include a serious discussion about quality in our nursing homes.

So, in the coming days, I will be appointing a task force to study the issues surrounding quality of life and quality of care in our nursing homes. This matter is urgent, and I will give this group a short timeline to report back to the people of Ohio.

They will travel across the state and will hear directly from residents and families about their lived experiences. We will give them a voice, and we will empower them to help drive solutions.

PUBLIC SAFETY/CRIME

The most important function of government is to keep families safe. And, I am grateful to the General Assembly for your continued support for law enforcement.

You have helped hundreds of agencies purchase body cameras. Recent events have once again shown us how important body camera footage can be, as well as the critical need for on-going training for our law enforcement officers.

In addition to more resources for body cameras, my budget will include \$40 million per year for continuous training for Ohio law enforcement officers on topics ranging from de-escalation to use-of-force to crisis intervention for someone with a mental illness. This is consistent with one of the recommendations of the Legislature's "Law Enforcement Training Funding Study Commission."

Training matters, and it makes a difference.

Through your support of our Violent Crime Reduction Grant Program, we are helping communities better fight and prevent crime. For example, in Westlake, the Police Department came to us because of a significant spike in domestic violence, aggravated assault, and gun crimes. With our grant funding, they purchased technology that helps predict where crime will occur. As a result, Westlake has reduced their gun-related crimes by 77 percent!

We have also created the Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center or O-NIC, whose focus all day, every day is helping local authorities with drug trafficking investigations. Many law enforcement agencies don't have the capacity to process large amounts of data from

computers and cell phones. O-NIC can help. So far, they have assisted in nearly 3,200 criminal investigations and analyzed more than 7,500 digital devices.

Now, I would like to talk about the “Next Generation 9-1-1 System.” You might be surprised to learn that under most current 9-1-1 systems, when you call on your cell phone, it doesn’t necessarily go directly to your local dispatch center. However, the Next Generation 9-1-1 System routes calls directly to local dispatchers and uses your cell phone’s GPS to more quickly get first responders to your exact location.

Our budget will fully fund this system in every Ohio community.

We will also help more agencies utilize the “Multi-Agency Radio Communication System” -- known as MARCS. More than 3,000 first responder agencies in Ohio currently use MARCS to communicate with each other across jurisdictional lines. However, many others use different radio systems, often making communication difficult with officers from other jurisdictions.

To improve the way our first responders communicate, our budget will fully pay the monthly fees for any agency that uses MARCS radios.

H2OHIO RIVERS INITIATIVE

In Ohio, water is one of our greatest assets! It is tied directly to our health, our quality of life, and our ability to create jobs.

Members of the General Assembly -- thank you! Thank you for protecting Ohio’s water and for twice investing in our H2Ohio program, which has been focused on the algae bloom problem in Lake Erie. I’m happy to report that this program is going according to plan and is on track!

So far, we have enrolled 1.5 million acres of farmland in Northwest Ohio to reduce runoff. We created or are actively creating or restoring more than 265 wetlands to filter these same nutrients out of over 110,000 acres of watershed. As part of this process, H2Ohio has also planted 80,000 trees and protected 90 threatened or endangered species.

Further, H2Ohio has put a focus on removing lead pipes -- and a major accomplishment came last year when the program helped remove and replace every single lead service line leading into childcare facilities in Cleveland!

We have exciting plans to expand H2Ohio to cover the entire State. Over the next biennium, we will begin work to improve the quality and the health of our rivers, which are critical for wildlife habitat, infrastructure, drinking water, economic development, and recreation. With your support, we will create the H2Ohio “Rivers Initiative.”

From the Little Muskingum to the Little Miami to the Cuyahoga, Kokosing, and Conneaut Creek -- we will work to preserve and protect the health of Ohio’s rivers and the land and

wildlife habitats alongside them by cleaning up polluted waterways, strategically removing dams, and restoring rivers across the State to their former glory.

CONCLUSION

The Bible warns us of the dangers of unclear and uncertain leadership -- as an “uncertain trumpet.”

“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for battle?”

And so, I have tried today to be crystal clear about where I believe we must go as a State and what we must do. However, I also recognize the great role -- the Constitutional role -- that this General Assembly plays in our system of government.

But, all of us must remember -- and take comfort in -- the fact our greatness as a state lies, not so much in our leaders, but rather in the wisdom, and the common sense, and the goodness of our people.

May God Bless Ohio -- and may God Bless its people.