

**Senate Finance Committee
Hearing on SB 968
Statement by Cynthia Carrow
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Chairman Brubaker, Chairman Hutchinson, Chairman Blake and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to address Senate Bill 968, sponsored by Senator Vulakovich, to highlight the work of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (the Conservancy) in contributing to the revitalization and attraction of Pittsburgh's riverfronts. Pennsylvania's rich natural heritage – our rivers, mountains, forests, and greenways – make the Commonwealth a very special place. Our natural assets define Pennsylvania as a great place to live and a destination for millions of visitors every year. We are blessed with an abundance of natural capital on which to build world-class destinations such as our waterfronts.

I am Cynthia Carrow, Vice President, Government and Community Relations for the Conservancy. Founded in 1932, the Conservancy's mission is to protect and restore exceptional places to provide our region with clean waters and healthy forests, wildlife and natural areas for the benefit of present and future generations. The Conservancy also creates green spaces and gardens, contributing to the vitality of our cities and towns, and the Conservancy preserves Fallingwater as a symbol of people living in harmony with nature.

Over its 82-year history, the Conservancy has focused its greening efforts on working with communities of all sizes to implement a variety of projects throughout the region. It is through this experience and know-how that the Conservancy has implemented a variety of greening projects along Pittsburgh's river corridors as well as along important connectors that draw people to Pittsburgh's waterfront, now a prime destination for regional residents and visitors to our City. Why else would over 1 million people flock to the point of downtown Pittsburgh to see a 40 foot inflatable rubber duck near the convergence of our three rivers, the Monongahela, the Allegheny and the Ohio!

I will share with the committee this morning several greening projects that the Conservancy has implemented that have contributed to the vitality of Pittsburgh's waterfront and adjacent areas. These projects represent examples that could be replicated to enhance riverfronts across the state.

One of the Conservancy's most successful efforts has been to plant thousands of large trees along roadways adjacent to the rivers and on streets and trails connecting people to the riverfront. Yesterday, the Conservancy and its partners celebrated the planting of the 20,000th

tree near Point State Park, in downtown Pittsburgh. Trees perform many services including storm water management, improving air quality, increasing residential property values and even increasing business activity in tree-lined shopping districts. The Conservancy also planted smaller trees on denuded riverbanks to restore ecology, create natural habitats, control erosion and help capture storm water. This project has greatly contributed to growing a more robust, healthy urban forest with economic, environmental and aesthetic benefits that will help achieve greater community livability and quality of life in the region.

Other greening projects that have enhanced Pittsburgh's riverfront and adjacent areas include:

- 400 large street planters offering seasonal floral displays that beautify the primary downtown Pittsburgh streets --- all of which link people to the riverfront,
- 500 hanging flower baskets on the three bridges connecting downtown Pittsburgh to the North Shore and along streets adjacent or connecting to the riverfront,
- Large landscape scale flower gardens on both sides of the Fort Pitt Tunnel and Bridge that provide a dramatic gateway to the riverfront and lower downtown Pittsburgh, and
- Numerous partnership projects with downtown building owners and operators interested in providing greener and more attractive properties, walkways, parking lots, and public places for residents, workers, and visitors.

The greening work of the Conservancy has been made possible through the generous support of our members, foundation and corporate partners, and through funding from public agencies. The Conservancy and its funding partners believe that greener environments in and around our riverfronts, neighborhoods, and commercial districts provide inviting places for residents, visitors, businesses and investors, which ultimately spur economic development.

Enormous investment has been made to transform Pittsburgh's riverfronts, which has greatly contributed to making Pittsburgh a dynamic and exciting place to live, raise a family, invest in business, or visit to enjoy outdoor recreation and entertainment destinations. But the Pittsburgh region is not finished. There is still more to be done to build on this success. Moreover, the opportunity is endless to develop enterprising waterfronts in towns and cities all along the great natural rivers of the Commonwealth. A waterfront development tax credit program will provide incentive to investment in waterfronts statewide and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy is pleased to support SB 968.

Thank you and I am happy to take questions.