

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Ohio Marine Trades Association Hosts First Statewide Boating Conference Since 2008**

**COLUMBUS, OH (March 26, 2025)** — The Ohio Marine Trades Association (OMTA) successfully hosted the 2025 Ohio Boating Conference on March 18–19 at the Renaissance Columbus Downtown Hotel, marking the first time since 2008 that the association has held a statewide conference.

The two-day event brought together more than 100 marine businesses, industry professionals, and state policymakers to address key issues impacting the recreational boating industry in Ohio, which generates a \$6.4 billion annual economic impact for the state.

“This conference was an important step forward in uniting Ohio’s marine industry around key issues like water quality, workforce development, and economic growth,” said Michelle Burke, President of OMTA. “We were proud to provide a platform where policymakers and marine business leaders could engage in meaningful conversations about the future of boating in our state.”

The conference featured panel discussions with state legislators focused on water quality and economic and workforce development, as well as breakout sessions on industry trends, marketing, and leadership development. Highlights included presentations from Matt Gruhn, President of the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas; marketing expert Dilara Casey, Director of Marketing at Bertec; and leadership consultant Dr. Bethany Klynn, President of Insight Leadership Consulting.

Panel participants included Representative Sean Brennan, Senator Paula Hicks-Hudson, and Representative D.J. Swearingen for the water quality discussion, and Representative Jack Daniels, Representative Melanie Miller, and Senator Bill Reineke for the economics and workforce development session.

“As an industry that supports thousands of jobs across Ohio, it’s critical that we continue to raise awareness of our economic and workforce contributions,” said Gary Tennefoss, Chairman of the OMTA Board and owner of Ravenna Marine. “Events like this reinforce the importance of investing in marine career training and ensuring our industry has a voice in state policymaking.”

With enthusiastic participation and renewed commitment from stakeholders, the Ohio Boating Conference reinforced OMTA's leadership in promoting, protecting, and advancing the marine industry throughout the state.

