



# OHIO CITIZEN ACTION EDUCATION FUND

Hearing on H.B. 554

Testimony of  
Melissa English, Executive Director  
Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund

Chairman Dovilla, Vice Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Ashford and members  
of the committee:

Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund is the research and education affiliate of Ohio Citizen Action, which offered its own testimony two weeks ago. Like our sister organization, we have worked on energy and consumer campaigns for more than four decades. Also like them, we oppose H.B. 554 on the grounds that it swims against the tide of inevitable change, unnecessarily hobbles our economy and fails to serve the public interest.

I assume that everyone in this room understands that coal and natural gas are finite resources. One day they will be completely gone. One day, Ohio and everyone else must prioritize energy efficiency and using renewable energy. I submit that this situation is rather like a toothache. Like a pain that comes

and goes at first, our transition to cleaner, renewable energy could be ignored for a while with little consequence. Taking action early to fill a cavity- or invest in our energy future- would cost us a little pain, a little time, a little money, but it's hardly a priority. As time passes however and the pain increases, the cost of our inaction becomes clearer and greater.

There's the cost to our economy, for one thing. An ambitious energy policy, including mandatory benchmarks for utility investment, could spur growth in Ohio's clean energy sector, adding to the 100,000 jobs we already have. Recently, nine companies employing more than 25,000 Ohioans urged reinstatement of mandatory renewable energy and energy efficiency standards, because lower electricity bills boost their bottom lines. Keeping them happy and employing our residents seems like a natural choice for a safe and prosperous future. Our window of opportunity to capture those clean energy jobs closes a little more every day we delay reinstating predictable, mandatory standards and as other states rush in to fill the void.

There's the cost to our health to consider as well. We burn more coal right now than anyone, except Texas and Indiana, and that takes a serious toll on us. When we and other groups succeeded in taking 22 of Ohio's oldest and dirtiest coal boilers offline in 2014, we saw a reduction of nearly 820 million pounds of air and water pollution *annually*. If we were to allow the old standards to snap back into place, in just one year we could avoid 2,230

asthma attacks, 120 trips to the ER, 230 heart attacks and more than 16,000 sick days from work and school.

We can't forget the cost to Ohio's consumers. By the utility companies' own reports, consumers saved \$1.03 billion on electric bills before the freeze. With so many of Ohio's families still reeling from the recession, we must do all we can to lower their bills and lighten their burden.

In closing, I urge you to embrace the inevitable transition to clean energy sooner rather than later. The longer we wait, the greater the cost to our economy, our consumers and our health. Let this bill die in committee, so Ohio businesses and citizens can once more reap the benefits of greater energy efficiency and renewable energy investment. Ohioans are watching to see who helps us reclaim our place as a clean energy leader.