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Energy & Natural Resources Committee

House Bill 730 Testimony
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Chair Landis, Vice Chair Hagan, and Ranking Member O'Brien, thank you for the opportunity to bring before you House Bill 730, legislation to restore federal asbestos regulation in Ohio.

In June, the Environmental Protection Agency announced it would be rolling back regulation pertaining to the limited uses of asbestos in new construction and manufacturing. Essentially, the agency would be permitting greater use of asbestos-based materials that were first linked to lung diseases and cancer in the 1960s. In the decades to follow, disease was not only limited to construction and manufacturing workers who dealt with asbestos but stretched to individuals who merely existed around the fibrous material. Today, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recognizes asbestos for what it is – a potent environmental carcinogen – able to cause multiple types of lung cancers, mesothelioma, and other lung diseases.

It was in the 1970s when the federal government realized the threat, and costs, asbestos poses to workers' health, leading the Occupational Safety and Health Administrations (OSHA) to pass regulation limiting worker exposure to the fiber. The Environmental Protection Agency later banned domestic asbestos production altogether in the 1980s.

With Ohio ranking 6th in the nation for mesothelioma and asbestosis deaths, it is important we maintain standards that have kept thousands of Ohioans safe and healthy and are proven to reduce the number of asbestos-related diagnoses each year. Our constituents' lives are at stake.

This legislation is straight forward and simple. It would require the director of the Ohio EPA to adopt rules that enforce federal asbestos regulation pertaining to the uses of asbestos in manufacturing and construction as they were on August 1, 2018.

We have an obligation to act and know too much about the dangers of asbestos to claim ignorance. Failure to maintain regulation will not only lead to an increase in health insurance costs across Ohio, it will cause hardworking Ohioans to suffer unnecessarily.

Thank you, again, for allowing my sponsor testimony this afternoon and for the opportunity to bring H.B. 730 before the committee. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.