

**Testimony of Ilene Shapiro  
Summit County Executive**

**Before the Ohio House Public Utilities Committee  
Hearing on Ohio House Bill 178: Zero-Emissions Nuclear Resource Program (ZEN)  
May 16, 2017**

Chairman Seitz, Vice Chair Carfagna, and members of the Ohio House Public Utilities Committee, my name is Ilene Shapiro and I am the Summit County Executive.

On behalf of the 31 communities that comprise Summit County and the more than 541,000 residents I represent, I appreciate the opportunity to express my strong support for House Bill 178.

As you know, HB 178 would establish a Zero-Emissions Nuclear Resource Program in Ohio. This legislation supports important jobs, economic growth, and environmental progress in our state by helping to preserve Ohio's two nuclear plants.

As Summit County Executive, I am responsible for maintaining a vibrant community that's an attractive place to live, work, and play. For more than a century, our county has attracted some of the best emerging technology and advanced manufacturing companies. We are home to some of the biggest names in their respective industries—like Goodyear, GOJO, Bridgestone, and Sterling as well as renowned medical facilities like Akron Children's Hospital.

Akron is also the home to FirstEnergy, which employs 2,468 people in our county and operates Ohio's Davis-Besse and Perry nuclear power plants.

As I work with the community leaders across Summit County to best position it for the future, my priorities are improving the lives of our region's families by assuring a healthy environment and driving job growth by focusing on economic development. To achieve these objectives and to move our community forward, nuclear power- and the environmental, economic, fuel diversity, and resiliency benefits these plants offer- MUST be part of our region's energy mix. Just like any smart investor, Ohio must ensure it has a diverse portfolio-- especially when it comes to reliable energy.

Ohio's nuclear power plants directly support the first of our priorities- a clean, healthy environment. Together, Davis-Besse and Perry produce approximately 90 percent of the state's carbon-free electricity. Their operation avoids more than 9 million tons of carbon emissions each year. 9 million tons of carbon emissions is equal to the carbon output of nearly 2 million passenger vehicles. The nuclear plants also prevent 4,000 tons of nitrogen oxides and 3,000 tons of sulfur dioxide emissions from entering our environment. These are particulates that are known to cause serious health threats. We all know that strong communities start with healthy communities

A recent American Lung Association "State of the Air" report found that while unhealthy levels of ozone have decreased in Summit County, the Cleveland-Akron Canton region still ranks ninth worst in the nation for year-round particle pollution.

Simply put, we cannot make critical improvements without nuclear power. If Ohio's nuclear plants closed, they likely will be replaced with carbon-emitting natural gas. This would be a step backward for Summit County rather than a stride toward a healthy energy future for our residents and their children.

We also owe it to our residents to provide a robust economy with abundant jobs, a comfortable standard of living and growth opportunities. As I mentioned earlier, FirstEnergy provides thousands of jobs in my county- and thousands more across the state. In fact, its two nuclear plants directly employ 1,400 skilled workers, and those plants also support more than 4,300 total jobs across the state at businesses that serve the plants, their employees, and their families. This is a business we in Summit County would fight to attract and instead, we are here fighting just to keep it in Ohio.

Nuclear plants help keep Ohio electricity prices low—they cut down on the fluctuation of prices and stabilize the cost to the consumer. This competitive pricing keeps Summit County- and all of Ohio an attractive place to do business. In fact, electricity prices in Ohio are below the national average. Yet, recent studies have suggested closure of nuclear plants would increase power prices since Ohio would require electricity from out-of-state resources to meet its energy needs.

In addition to attracting new companies, one of my main goals is retaining the county's existing businesses while helping them grow and prosper. To that effort, we have excellent partners in FirstEnergy's economic development team. They are a constant presence in our economic development efforts. Their staff knows Summit County and they have had much success in helping the County and other business and government entities establish relationships with international, national, state, and local economic development agencies and professionals. These efforts, coupled with affordable electricity prices in our state, have had a significant impact on our ability to draw world-class businesses to Summit County. Specifically, First Energy was a critical player in keeping Goodyear and Bridgestone headquartered in Summit County. While this was important win for our County, it should be seen as a victory for the State. First Energy partnered with the businesses, with the local government entities and specifically with the State to make sure the economy driving jobs and the prestige affiliated with these International businesses was not lost to another State.

I could continue to talk to you about the nuts and bolts of this bill, and what the experts will tell you and what the lobbyists probably already have. But what might be missing from the conversation is heart. And, it may come as a surprise to some of you, but, First Energy is one of the heart beats of our community. FirstEnergy has long shared its prosperity with the community as an outstanding corporate citizen and neighbor. Through its FirstEnergy Foundation and giving nature of its employees, the company has provided more than \$6.9 million over the past ten years to organizations and agencies in Summit County. In addition, the company has been a primary sponsor of an Akron classic- the All-American Soapbox Derby- and recently became a presenting sponsor of the Akron Marathon. These two events alone attract tens of thousands of participants from all over the globe to our County, to our State. But, beyond those well recognized events, it's the less well known contributions, like providing hot meals at our Open M agency- it's being a partner in many of our early education programs—it's being at the table when our most needy need them the most. And, while I realize that your voters, and mine, may push back on the additional fee that comes as a result of this legislation, all investments must be evaluated on their return. In this case, the return is jobs, a cleaner environment and the presence of heart in our community.

There's just no doubt that the region- and entire state-benefits from having FirstEnergy as a strong corporate partner. With ZEN in place, FirstEnergy will be able to spend time fostering relationships with customers and the community instead of directing its focus on navigating the uncertainty of the future.

I'd like to close today, by pointing out a recent action taken by Summit County Council that demonstrates just how strongly we believe in the ZEN program. On April 17<sup>th</sup>, Summit County Council's eleven members unanimously and, in a bi-partisan fashion passed a resolution, not only supporting the legislation and urging its passage, but also declaring this issue an emergency for the county. In the interest of the health, safety of the citizens of Summit County- as well as those across Ohio- we urge you to pass House Bill 178 without delay to preserve nuclear and our economic and environmental future. Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.