

Testimony by Ariel Miller
to the Ohio House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
in opposition to HB 6

Greetings to Chairman Nino Vitale, Vice Chair Darrell Kick, and Members of the Committee!

Thank you for the opportunity to testify to you on HB 6! I come to you as a Christian witness who has spent decades working in Episcopal and interfaith anti-poverty programs in Ohio. For ten years I was executive director of the Episcopal Community Services Foundation of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio, which raised funds and awarded grants in cities, suburbs, and rural communities across the state. A big share of our grants went to emergency assistance programs trying to prevent utility shut-offs across the state.

I currently serve as a Cincinnati-area volunteer with Ohio Interfaith Power and Light and on the Human Services Advisory Committee that reviews grant proposals to the City of Cincinnati. Over the next week this committee faces the daunting task of awarding the \$1.5 million that the City can afford in response to over \$2.7 million in grant requests from nonprofits struggling to prevent homelessness.

If you continue to invest in energy efficiency and move the state towards cheaper electric power, you will help remove the barrier of past-due electric bills that impede homeless families from being able to move into new apartments and resume electric service. If you pass HB 6, you will destroy Ohio's renewable energy standards and the energy efficiency program by making them optional, and destroy one of your best tools for making electricity safe and affordable for all.

Ohio's current renewable energy standards and energy efficiency programs are a huge win-win for consumers. They benefit the state's most vulnerable citizens – low wage-workers and seniors on fixed income – as well as businesses to reduce their monthly energy costs in the following ways:

- By promoting greater use of wind and solar, whose costs per kWh continue to fall.
- By funding information and rebates that help individuals and institutions to use less electricity.

Using revenue assessed on all Ohio ratepayers to prop up the continued operation of First Energy's two ageing nuclear power plants is a terrible investment economically and from the perspective of public health. The multiple layers of safety back-up systems for nuclear plants make these old plants the most expensive way to generate electricity by far. If the plants were cost-effective, First Energy would not be in financial crisis.

Remember the devastating nuclear accident at Fukushima and the huge dislocations it caused in Japan. Expert testimony last week informed the Energy Generation Subcommittee on the environmental damage and risks incurred in mining, transporting and processing uranium and the *still unsolved political and technical problem of safely isolating spent fuel*, which will continue to emit radioactivity for thousands of years.

Last week we heard from a school district official terribly worried about the impact that closing one of the nuclear plants would have on the tax base the district depends on. Wind and solar installations can replace this lost tax revenue in many communities as well as providing stable income to farm families. Remember the testimony last week to the Energy Generation Subcommittee about Innergex's planned solar farm in Brown County, which will generate \$1,000,000 a year in fees to leaseholders (such as farmers), and 35 years of new revenue for the county schools. HB 6 creates such uncertainty that it jeopardizes the planned \$250 million investment in the solar farm and up to 150 permanent new jobs. This is just one example.

I visited the Hog Creek wind farm last year in Hardin County and heard enthusiastic testimony from a member of the county Chamber of Commerce and a local farmer. The farmer said that the predictable income from the turbines is a substantial help to her family's farming income and stability. She told me that the wind farm provides \$800,000 in new annual revenue to her children's elementary school, which has improved its educational program substantially as a result.

Our parish in the Cincinnati suburb of Wyoming has reduced our CO₂ output by 11 tons a year, and is saving thousands of dollars a year thanks to the Energy Efficiency program this bill would gut by making funding optional. We were able to get a high-level energy audit at half price thanks to a state grant and qualified for Duke rebates that offset a significant portion of the capital costs of changing almost 150 ceiling fixtures from fluorescent to LED. The money freed up in our budget can now be used to meet more community needs.

Please do not send HB 6 to the House. Instead, please act to protect the health, safety, and financial stability of Ohioans in every part of the state by continuing the renewable energy standards and energy efficiency programs which the Ohio Legislature had the foresight to pass in a powerful bipartisan vote in 2008.

Thank you again for the time and care you are putting into considering these issues, and for the opportunity to share my concerns and hopes with you.