

**Proponent Testimony of  
Ottawa County Emergency Management Agency Director Fred Petersen**

**Before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee of  
The Ohio House of Representatives**

**May 15, 2019**

Chairman Vitale, Vice-Chair Kick, Ranking Member Denson, and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today as a proponent of Substitute House Bill 6. My name is Fred Petersen, I am the Emergency Management Agency Director for Ottawa County. I would like to take this opportunity to impress upon you the importance of the continued operation of the state's two nuclear power plants.

There's no doubt that Ohio's nuclear power plants are a significant source of reliable, secure and clean electricity for the state. The Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station in Ottawa County and the Perry Nuclear Power Plant in Lake County generate electricity regardless of weather conditions or the availability of natural gas and coal. These plants also benefit Ohio's air quality as nuclear power produces no carbon emissions.

Ohio's nuclear power plants contribute to a diverse energy portfolio in Ohio, reducing the state's dependence upon any one fuel source. Without these plants the electricity grid in our region will be significantly more dependent upon natural gas for electricity. This increased reliance upon natural gas will make Ohio more vulnerable to disruptions in the availability of natural gas. This is the proverbial 'putting all our eggs in one basket'! As an Emergency Manager, I never consider it to be a good practice to rely upon one resource. Redundancy is critical.

I would like to remind you of a couple of instances that illustrate our vulnerability if we rely too heavily upon natural gas. During the polar vortex in 2014, I experienced first-hand just how vulnerable the regional grid was to this demand for natural gas. Just as

we entered one of the coldest periods of the polar vortex, I was informed that PJM may have to implement rolling brown-outs in our area due to grid instability . This was due to the high residential demand for natural gas, which significantly reduced the availability of natural gas for electricity generation. Fortunately, we were able to avoid the rolling brown-outs, largely due to the contribution the nuclear power plants provided to the grid. You can imagine the problems these interruptions to the grid could have caused for our residents. This is not an issue I wish to experience again.

Another recent example occurred this past winter, in that state up north. They experienced gas shortages that nearly led to gas not being available to be delivered to homes and critical facilities. This was due to the extreme cold coupled with a fire at a gas compressor station. Customers were asked to curtail the usage of gas and electricity to help the utility pull through this event.

In addition to their contribution to a stable and reliable grid, there are other significant ways that these power plants contribute to keeping our communities safe. Davis-Besse and Perry help maintain public safety and preparedness by providing critical funding that supports emergency response agencies in the counties surrounding the plants and at the state level. These funds assist in the training and pay salaries for our emergency management personnel and allow us to purchase and maintain equipment and facilities.

Millions of dollars are allocated to Davis-Besse and Perry to support emergency preparedness. While some of the funds are used specifically to prepare us for the highly unlikely possibility of a radiological emergency in the state, they also help us to ensure emergency responders are ready to address a wide variety of events, even those that are unrelated to plant operation. For example, some of this funding is used to maintain the Ottawa County Public Safety Radio System used by fire and emergency medical services, law enforcement, the County siren system, and school buses. This radio system is used daily in the protection and care of our residents, students and visitors.

In addition to, and perhaps of more importance than the funding provided, the counties involved in radiological emergency planning and preparedness have robust plans and procedures that are exercised and evaluated regularly. Our communities benefit from a well-rounded emergency services force that is always ready to support public health and safety, and Ohio's nuclear plants play a large role in making that possible.

As an example of this, in June of 2010 when an EF4 tornado was moving through Lake Township in Wood County and on its way toward Ottawa County, we were able to sound our warning sirens in Ottawa County twice prior to its arrival, warning our residents of imminent danger. This saved multiple lives. This siren system only exists in Ottawa County because of the Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station.

In summary, I challenge you to find a better, or more proven, corporate partner of Emergency Management in the State of Ohio, than the nuclear power industry has been.

As of today, the long-term viability of these plants is at risk and therefore so is Ohio's balanced energy portfolio. Our state is rapidly moving toward a very narrow energy portfolio, one that I believe puts our citizens' safety at risk.

Just as we require safety for so many products we use every day, why shouldn't we require the added safety of a diverse electricity market?

Your job here is a difficult one, but I call on you to find a way to ensure the continued operation of Ohio's nuclear power plants.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I would be happy to take any questions from the Committee.