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Testimony In Support of House Bill 6

As someone who has, for the better part of the past decade, poured everything I have into the development of a large, job-creating solar project in Appalachian Ohio, allow me to express my strong support for the Ohio Clean Air Plan, which would be created by HB 6--legislation that is currently working its way through the Ohio House of Representatives.

The reason is simple: HB 6—for the first time in Ohio history--elevates the goal of a cleaner electricity mix to a preeminent place in state law and policy. It specifically encourages the development of “clean energy resources” that emit zero carbon emissions—the type of energy that companies are increasingly demanding in order to locate operations in Ohio. That means solar and wind energy, in addition to nuclear power.

With the passage of HB 6, Ohio will commit to a true “all of the above” state energy policy—one that relies on a diversified energy mix, including nuclear and renewable sources of energy. If HB 6 fails, and we revert back to current law, we will continue down our current path, which is the “let’s put all our eggs in a single basket” path--the path of electricity generated from natural gas.

With the passage of HB 6, Ohio’s air will be cleaner, full stop; if HB 6 fails, the electricity currently generated by nuclear sources and the zero carbon sources envisioned by the legislation will be switched out for electricity generated from natural gas—and Ohio’s air quality will be worsened.

In addition to more widespread business use of renewables, HB 6 will ensure that the customers of Ohio’s public utilities, which include most households in Ohio, will enjoy a cleaner mix of sources in the electricity they consume—a benefit that will be enjoyed by rich and poor alike. But if HB 6 is defeated, and we rely on current law, clean energy projects that provide electricity to the customers of public utilities will be substantially fewer.

With the passage of HB 6, Ohio’s increasing reliance on out-of-state generation will be reversed. Existing laws have led to a decline in the ratio of electricity generated to electricity consumed within the boundaries of Ohio from 92% in 1991 to 82% today. As part of my job in recent years, I have traveled all across the world doing power plant development, and I have yet to find a state, province, or nation that would find comfort in such data.

With the passage of HB 6, the economic development benefits of new Ohio-based clean energy generation will be advanced. And interestingly, when an “all of the above” energy strategy becomes a reality, all of Ohio wins—with the bulk of gas resources coming from the east, the bulk of solar resources from the south and southwest, the bulk of wind resources from the west and northwest, and the nuclear resources situated in the north. If HB 6 goes down to defeat, this “all of Ohio” energy strategy, and the jobs and incomes that go with it, will go down with it.

HB 6 is a game changer when it comes to the primacy of clean electricity in the State of Ohio. Can the legislation be improved? Sure, we are only in the first quarter of the game. But as far as I’m concerned, the right point of departure is not HB 6 versus some hoped-for nirvana, but rather HB 6 versus current law. And HB 6 is a much better platform than current law, when it comes to the development of solar power plants.

Therefore, I feel that those of us who care about clean energy ought to figure out how to take advantage of this unique moment in our state’s history—and the unique clean energy platform contemplated by HB 6-- to promote a true “all-of-the above” vision of what Ohio’s future energy map might look like. Count me and my company, Hecate Energy, as a supporter of this effort and this legislation.