

Testimony on HB 6 5/23/19

Chairman Vitale, Vice-Chair Kirk, Ranking member Denson, and members of the Committee:

My name is Mary Ellen Berger and I live in Columbus OH. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I spoke before this committee two weeks ago, in opposition to HB6. My position has not changed and I continue to strongly oppose this bill. It is a bailout for First Energy, and as a ratepayer I do not want to pay for old, uneconomic nuclear plants with safety issues.

Since the hearing on 5/8/19, I have received two direct mailings supporting HB6. Clearly First Energy and their front groups are spending a lot of money promoting this bill, just as they have donated a lot of money to some members of this legislature. All of this information is public, and voters are paying attention. We expect our legislators to represent us, not corporate interests. Our public health, safety and our environment are more important than money.

As you can see this flier is extremely misleading and I would like to say that I think calling this the "Ohio Clean Air Program" is outright deceptive. It talks about securing "Ohio's Energy Future for our grandchildren". I am going to become a grandmother this year- I do not think of old and potentially dangerous nuclear plants as a "clean energy future" for my grandchild. Maybe 50 years ago, not today. Here is a large photo of a windmill and solar panels at the top of the page with a caption "If zero-carbon emission sources are not given the opportunity to thrive, a near monopoly of fossil fuels will take over the market." So just like the deceptive title of "Clean Air Program", this is implying that wind and solar energy are being promoted by this bill, when in fact the opposite is true. It is an outrage that you would try to gut our effective clean energy and efficiency standards, and then promote this as clean energy!

Another flier by a group called Generation Now is also geared towards seniors and falsely states that this is going to save them money. "Seniors' energy bills will sky rocket". There may be some seniors who are misled by this. There is certainly a concerted effort to do that. Please understand that most of your constituents know better, or they will soon learn the truth about this bill. A friend called me yesterday who had received an aggressive marketing call about this "Clean Air Program" and at the end of the call she was connected to Sen Kunze's office. She thought this was a good thing- of course she wants clean energy like wind and solar. When she found out the true details of this bill she called Sen Kunze's office back- she felt deceived and like most of us is very opposed to this bill.

Ohioans do want clean air- and water, and land. Recent polling from the Ohio Conservative Energy Forum finds that two-thirds of conservative voters support expanding Ohio's commitment to renewable energy to 50% of the state's electricity. The bill goes in the opposite direction and Ohioans don't want it.

We want clean energy - from truly clean renewable sources like wind and solar, not old nuclear plants. Many people who testified two weeks ago spoke about the extraordinary success of our state's renewable energy and efficiency standards. They have saved Ohioans billions of dollars and have created thousands of jobs. I am appalled that the creators of this bill are trying to gut these programs, in a blatant handout to First Energy. We as ratepayers should not be paying for this ill conceived plan.

Finally, I am not an expert on nuclear energy but have learned a lot the past few weeks. That may be an unintended consequence of this proposed bill. I didn't know about safety issues at Davis-Besse and I am not surprised given the age of the plant. Of course there is also the huge problem with nuclear waste which was discussed in testimonies yesterday. I am old enough to remember Three Mile Island and actually lived near there in the 70's - it was very scary. There was a recent attempt by Exelon and the PA legislature to bailout the remaining unit at TMI, and this effort failed. The PA legislature understood the obvious- this did not make economic sense, and is not the future for energy production.

I believe we are at a crossroads in OH - there is the economics of cheaper, cleaner renewable energy and there is certainly public demand for this. Jobs in the renewable energy sector are growing at twice the rate of jobs in the rest of the economy. You can't ignore this any longer. We are facing unprecedented climate change and have less than 12 years to stop catastrophic changes. I want a future for my grandchild, and my children.

I ask this committee and our legislature to listen vote NO on HB 6 and to work on a true clean energy policy that looks to the future, not the past.

Thank you for your time.

Mary Ellen Berger

Columbus, OH

