

**Ohio House of Representatives  
Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
Opponent Testimony  
Substitute House Bill 6**

**Leo Almeida, The Nature Conservancy in Ohio  
May 23, 2019**

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Chairman Vitale, Vice-chair Kick, Ranking Member Denson, and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an opponent to Substitute House Bill 6. I am Leo Almeida and I am a climate and energy policy associate at The Nature Conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy is a non-partisan, science-based organization that seeks to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We have chapters in all 50 states and work in over 70 countries across the globe. We work collaboratively with businesses, farmers, sportsmen groups, government and local communities to develop pragmatic, market-based solutions to conservation challenges, including air pollution. More than 65,000 Ohioans are Nature Conservancy supporters.

The Nature Conservancy commends the General Assembly for recognizing the importance of a lower carbon future and their desire to see Ohio make a positive contribution to this goal. The Nature Conservancy commends the General Assembly for recognizing the importance of a lower carbon future and their desire to see Ohio make a positive contribution to this goal. The changes made in Substitute House Bill 6 do not allow sources of clean air and lower carbon emitters to equally receive benefits and continue to flourish successfully in Ohio. This bill is a nuclear, and now coal bailout, that does not improve our air quality, but supplies funding to prop up uneconomic sources of energy that are not able to compete in the open market due to the lowering costs of other types of energy. We previously testified as an opponent before this committee on House Bill 6 and hoped to see improvements made to this bill that would specifically address the concerns that language was not clear that all types of renewables would qualify. When I testified previously before the subcommittee, I was asked to point to language in the bill that would limit renewables from participating in the Clean Air Program. I responded to that question by specifically pointing out the language that appeared to define qualified sources as those that operated continuously and added restrictions to current renewable energy sources. Had that definition and other unclear areas of the bill been clarified to include all renewables equally, we would acknowledge the changes that answered the questions posed by us and many others. We heard members of this committee say that this is not a bailout bill and that it is good for renewable energy sources. We also heard from members of this committee that this bill was a win-win for all energy sources, and that supporters of renewable energy should realize this program will provide benefits to them as well, but we don't see any improvements or clarifying language. Instead of fixing those concerns, renewable energy sources are now out of consideration altogether for ratepayer dollars that all Ohioans will pay, yet not receive an equal benefit.

Numerous witnesses came before this committee and testified to the positive economic impacts Ohio's current renewable portfolio standards (RPS) and energy efficiency resource standards (EERS) provide, yet substitute HB 6 repeals those standards which have brought investment and jobs to our state and proposes to replace it with a program that only rewards nuclear energy and coal. We know those sectors are very important to Ohio and also create jobs which benefit our economy, however, it seems counterintuitive to set up a program which only provides benefits to older, less economical sources of energy, while removing any benefits for others. We would offer that a clearly articulated all-inclusive program, which allows market forces and our desire to invest in a lower carbon future to thrive and flourish is a better approach. Furthermore, there were witnesses that testified that the lack of a wind setback fix was a deterrent to business investment and expansion and a missed opportunity to encourage wind energy development in Ohio. Reinstating the former wind setback or even including the more recent compromise proposals would have addressed this issue and sent a clear message that Ohio is open for business for all forms of energy. The addition of this new provision to this version of the bill makes it clear that Ohio's policy is to make it even more difficult to site new wind farms in Ohio by adding another regulatory layer and creating yet another barrier to development. This seems to contradict the momentum in the General Assembly to reduce regulations and streamline permitting to improve our business climate and relieve the regulatory burden that businesses face. This bill clearly picks winners and losers. We heard the testimony about the energy standards being "mandates" yet this bill replaces what some call a mandate with a different mandate on all Ohioans to pay for older, less competitive sources of energy. We believe this policy change will have negative economic, public health, and environmental impacts for our state.

We realize the intent of the sponsors is to repeal the existing standards, yet the testimony presented before this committee was overwhelmingly in favor of maintaining the standards. Most proponents of the bill talked more about the economic impact of losing jobs and how devastating that will be for the regions affected, rather than the damage done by repealing Ohio's renewable and energy efficiency standards. Those standards have directly contributed to more jobs, investment and expansion in Ohio from a growing national and global sector. According to the 2018 Clean Jobs Midwest Report released on April 9, 2019, "The clean energy industry in Ohio is a major employer with more than 112,486 jobs. In 2018, Ohio clean energy businesses added 4,975 jobs." In addition, the current standards have contributed to cost savings for Ohioans, specifically the energy efficiency standard has saved ratepayers \$5.1 billion since their inception according to the utilities' annual PUCO reports. Should this bill become law, the elimination of the savings from the current energy efficiency standard combined with the new cost of the Clean Air Program mandate will cost Ohioans hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

The standards encouraged business investments and as we previously testified provided certainty to large, medium, and small businesses such as those profiled in TNC's *Clean and Green* report. That report profiled 16 very diverse businesses across Ohio as they introduced and integrated renewable energy and energy efficiency to their operations. They may believe that investment in clean energy is the right thing to do, but make no mistake, they were clear to us that they were looking out for their bottom line, seeing market trends, responding to consumer demand and making smart decisions to maximize profits.

As we previously testified, our 2017 poll on the attitudes of registered voters in Ohio toward clean energy demonstrated a clear preference for legislators to support policies that encourage greater emphasis on all types of renewable energy and energy efficiency in Ohio. Ohioans, even those in coal country showed overwhelming support for placing a greater emphasis on energy efficiency, solar power, and wind power than on nuclear, natural gas, and coal. In fact, 42% want to see less emphasis on nuclear power, 79% support Ohio reaching the 12.5% Renewable Portfolio Standard in its current form, and 86% support a more reasonable setback limit for wind turbines. We provided those polling results to the committee through the Chairman's office. The changes in Substitute HB 6 do not align with what voters statewide expressed regarding clean energy policies and investment.

We realize nuclear power can provide benefits as a source of energy while the correct policies and incentives to encourage further growth in the renewable sector are implemented, but Substitute HB 6 does not encourage further growth, nor does it equally benefit all sources of lower carbon energy. A comprehensive energy plan is a complex issue that deserves careful consideration and we truly appreciate the time spent by this committee to listen to differing views on what Ohio's policies should be. We want to work with the General Assembly to develop a comprehensive energy bill that responds to current and future demand for a forward-thinking energy portfolio. We would ask that you provide leadership on a more comprehensive plan that encourages economic development by removing the currently prohibitive wind energy setback rules, addresses the critical homeland security and reliability issues related to grid modernization, updates utility business models, responds to the increase in production and investment by automobile manufactures in electric vehicle production and the need for adequate infrastructure, and expanding on-bill financing options for consumers. These may seem daunting, but we have no doubt Ohio's policymakers, businesses and manufacturers, municipalities, environmental and conservation groups, consumer advocacy agencies and all the others that have been a part of the process can come together to craft an approach that will better respond to what Ohioan's want. We offer our organizations help to the General Assembly to create an inclusive approach that reinforces lower carbon goals, encourages the economic benefits of clean energy, incentivizes new technology to address current challenges related to energy storage, remove impediments to growth, and sends a clear message that Ohio is open for business.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony as an opponent to Substitute House Bill 6. I am happy to address any questions you might have.

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