

Chairman Nino Vitale, Energy and Natural Resources Committee

I am writing you today to voice my support for HB401 (aka: Reineke Referendum).

I just finished watching the first committee hearing (11-13-2019) for HB401. And although I am very pleased with the effort Rep. Bill Reineke has made by working on and introducing this bill, there were a few problems in the question period that I feel could be better addressed.

Rep. Denson made a suggestion that this bill would be redundant because the OPSB already gives citizens an opportunity to make their views known. Although this is technically true, the OPSB does have an avenue available to submit written testimony, there is no way for a citizen like myself to hold any appointed (not elected) member of that board accountable or to know my voice is being heard and counted. My written testimony is nothing more than noise being added to a stack of documents, lost amongst countless others, while the OPSB is just making sure one multi-million dollar company has properly jumped through their latest hoop while stamping their approval and moving on to the next hoop. There is nothing in this process to hold any party, whether that be the wind company or OPSB, accountable. Furthermore, unlike an election or voting on a hotly contested issue, this process through the OPSB to voice your opinion is a hidden, unknown to most entity. Had it not been for an organization like the Seneca Anti-Wind Union, I wouldn't have known this process even existed and I believe, to this day, you could easily poll the citizens of the affected area and still find the majority of them do not know this process is something that even exists. That, of course, would not be the case if these issues were allowed to come to a vote, like HB401 would make possible.

Please keep in mind, even if a wind project were to come to a vote this doesn't mean it would automatically kill the project. There would be no more added burden placed on the pro side than there would be placed on the anti side to get the votes they need to pass. In fact, it would be quite the opposite, because we are still looking at a David versus Goliath situation where the financial balance of power is still on the side of Goliath.

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