

**November 20, 2019**

**Opposition Witness Written Testimony, SB 33**

**Ohio House Public Utilities Committee**

**Rev. Dr. Marian Stewart, Sr. Minister, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus**

Chairman Callendar, Vice Chair Wilkin, Ranking Member Smith and members of the House Public Utilities Committee; I oppose SB 33.

A few years ago, I met a couple with a young daughter. She was a grade-schooler who could not read. Her parents were well educated and held good jobs. They were respected in their community and wanted only the best for their family. However, they held the belief that letting their child “go back” to an era when reading skills weren’t necessary for a child to enjoy life, her happiness would be enhanced. The parents never insisted or even encouraged their child to acquire pertinent literacy skills. If their daughter ever does learn to read, she will never be able to catch up with her peers. This decision by the parents will impact her entire life.

As leaders in our government and in our communities, we have an analogous role to the young girl’s parents. We have choices to make that will impact the future of our children and generations beyond. SB33 takes us back to an age of blind dependence on fossil fuels. Our lives are enhanced by all the advances made possible by drilling, mining, fracking, extraction, processing, refining, pipelining, and consumption. Economically, it boosted our GDP for generations and our padded our wallets. But those were the good old days when we didn’t know better.

Today, we are the adults who have access to all sorts of information, and we do know better. We know the horrific damage the fossil fuel industry, downstream consumers, and government has done to our environment. Report after report cites the toll of rising seas – look at Venice right now; higher temperatures – raging wildfires and droughts; and extinction of species – polar bears, whales, and birds. All of the profits – and taxpayer monies - are now going to shore up threatened infrastructure, move cities to higher ground, and respond to environmental disasters. SB33 continues this old way of thinking – and penalizes people and institutions,

including churches and religious organizations that point out the errs of our ways. Can we not read? What way of life are we protecting? For whom?

Yesterday, breakthrough news broke of a private research effort to find a carbon neutral way to make concrete. Using the power of the sun, mirrors, and artificial intelligence, the researchers were able to create enough high heat energy to make concrete – and steel. This revolutionary project addresses the 7 percent of carbon emissions from industry that we once thought was untouchable.

Why are we not putting our money and resources there? Or in other renewable technology? There are thousands of jobs – and profits – waiting. Instead of legislating our way through a dangled maze of legal definitions rife with loopholes and entrapments for well-meaning citizens and organizations trying to lead us into the future, why don't we simply fund the future? Voting for legislation that protects a past where we only see happiness – or profits of extinction – is like never teaching our children the necessary skills to move forward.

I come from an old religious tradition that has paid dearly over the centuries for encouraging people to look deeper into what they are being told, read the information for themselves, and make informed decisions based upon logical and reasoned examination. We have been burned alive at the stake, tortured in prison cells, and run out of home and country.

I protest today and every day the continuation of old policies, practices, and laws that do not learn the lessons of the past and look forward to building a better future for all.

We can choose to go backwards to a day where our children did not have to read because the adults just wanted them to be happy, which is not a win for anyone. Or, we could choose a future for our children where they could actually survive. SB33 is not in that direction. Don't do it. Amendments or not. It is backwards. Legislate forward instead.

Thank you.