

Dear Chairman Callender and members of the Public Utilities Committee,

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 33, as a concerned citizen of OH, as a mother, and now as a grandmother. I just learned that we will not be permitted to testify in person tomorrow so I hope you take the time to read my testimony.

I testified against this bill this past September. Since that time, the Australian wildfires have killed 29 people and over 1 billion animals, and burned at least 27 million acres. Just after the New Year, floods and mudslides in Jakarta claimed over 60 lives and displaced tens of thousands of people. This month dozens of people have also died in floods in Brazil, and many are still missing.

The scenes from these disasters are apocalyptic. It's hard to fathom this kind of death and destruction while sitting here in central Ohio. Our winters are warmer with little snow now, and our skies are their usual grey. I will never complain about grey skies again after seeing photos the bright red skies of Sydney.

I struggle when talking to people who don't believe in climate change. People are dying. How can you deny that? Do you have to wait until you witness it firsthand? Do you need to see a fire tornado, or children swept away in raging rivers? What will it take? A financial collapse maybe?

This is now a climate crisis and we need to act. Quickly. That means dramatically reducing our green house gas emissions. Listen to Blackrock if you don't believe me.

So what are we doing here in Ohio? Well, last year this legislature passed HB6, killing clean energy standards. We are getting international attention for passing the worst energy bill in the nation. It will hurt our economy and our environment, and contribute to the climate crisis.

Many of you also know about plans for a massive petrochemical complex in eastern OH. It would exponentially expand fracking and frack waste in our state, along with the construction of hundreds of miles of pipelines, several ethane cracker plants and the construction of gas storage sites under the Ohio River. It would increase GHG emissions, especially methane which is more potent than CO2 as a greenhouse gas. All to make plastic to ship to China.

So the timing of SB 33 is not a coincidence. This bill is being pushed by the influential fossil fuel and chemical industries, who are working hard to get their permits to pollute here. They want to scare people from protesting and raising awareness to this environmental nightmare. They are also pushing for a bill, SB222, to prevent cities in OH from enacting plastic bans. The growing awareness and resistance to plastic pollution will stop this.

It is very clear that the intent of SB33 is to intimidate concerned citizens and non-profit groups, and to discourage us from expressing our opposition to the environment destruction of our communities. It won't work. We will not become the sacrifice zone for corporate profits. Our health and our children's future is on the line.

People are protesting all around the world for climate action. Young climate strikers are leading the way. They should not be threatened with felony charges as they fight for their lives.

We expect you, as our legislators, to uphold our constitution and to protect those you took an oath to serve. I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 33, and to listen to your constituents. We want clean, renewable energy- not pipelines and plastic, and more pollution. We want a future for our children and grandchildren.

Mary Ellen Berger
Columbus, OH