

## **Testimony of Jerry C. Cirino, Commission President of Lake County, Ohio**

Chairman Stein, Chairman O'Brien and members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today to address HB 6 and the need to ensure that nuclear power can maintain its vital role as a reliable, resilient, clean-energy solution for Ohio. I am Jerry C. Cirino, Commission President of Lake County, Ohio, where the Perry Nuclear Generating Station is located in Perry, Ohio.

I am proud to serve a diverse community of residents, with a growing population of over 230,000, who embrace the region as their home with pride, as have generations before them. Lake County boasts a strong labor force and economic capital with an unemployment rate of 5.2%, and a median household income higher than the United States national average at \$60,000. Lake County has many assets, including the Perry Nuclear Power Plant. These assets must be used to attract and retain businesses in our community and state.

As Commissioner, I want to emphasize today that the Perry Nuclear Power Plant is an engine for economic growth, as it contributes to clean-energy efforts, and secures our power supply for all of Ohio. The future of the Perry Nuclear Power Plant is uncertain. To stand by and allow it to close its doors prematurely while witnessing the economic calamity that would ensue would be extremely detrimental to my constituents. According to a survey of Ohio statewide voter attitudes conducted in March 2019, 53% of respondents across the entire state are in support of a proposal to keep the state's nuclear plants operating. That number jumped to 75% once respondents learned of the economic, environmental, and energy security benefits of Ohio's nuclear plants.

Since nuclear power plants keep electricity prices low and keep productive economic activity in Ohio, they create exponential economic opportunities and increased tax revenues throughout the economy. For instance, the Perry Nuclear Power Plant pays more than \$18.8 million annually in state and local taxes. This revenue flows back to our communities to provide critically important services for our senior citizen and children's programs, first responders, school districts, and other vital services. Additionally, it has been estimated that the closure of the Perry Nuclear Power Plant, as well as the Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station, would reduce Ohio's gross domestic product by \$510 million annually.

It's important to understand what's behind those numbers. For instance, the accommodation and food services industry is among the top ten private employment sectors in Lake County. Hotels and restaurants would be greatly harmed if the Perry Nuclear Power Plant closes, due to the major projects and activities at the plant that require vendors and service providers to stay in Lake County for extended periods. The county would suffer lower sales taxes and bed tax revenue -- and sales tax receipts, in particular, are the major source of revenue for the county budget.

The Perry Nuclear Power Plant in Perry employs approximately 700 people, with 500 of them residing in Lake County. In fact, the plant is one of the largest and most significant employers in our county. I am concerned that if we allow the Perry nuclear plant to close, many working families in Lake County would transfer elsewhere because their unique expertise is in the nuclear field. Look no further than what happened after the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant in Vernon, VT shut down in 2014. We can expect the same effects in Ohio: homes will be sold,

children will be removed from our school districts, and there will be a loss in local community revenue for small and medium-sized businesses. We will be creating a recessionary environment in our community and those surrounding the Davis-Besse plant.

The annual vendor spending by the Perry nuclear plant is estimated to be approximately \$64 million in Lake County alone. If the Perry Nuclear Power Plant prematurely closes its doors, the Ohio state government will have to make up for the compounding shortfalls in Lake County's budget for services and benefits that our communities consider essential and rely upon. The economic prosperity and opportunity that citizens and working families of Lake County have experienced for an extended period will be severely undermined.

I would be remiss if I did not highlight Lake County's reputation in agriculture. Our county is blessed with some of the most fertile soil anywhere. The region earned the distinction as the Nursery Capital of the World, and our award-winning wine industry has ripened as an emerging tourism destination. Our commercial, agricultural, and industrial bases open many opportunities for a better quality of life and for economic growth for residents of our state. The Perry Nuclear Power Plant prevents substantial emissions of carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxide, and other particulate matter. Any energy generation solution chosen to replace the Perry Nuclear Power Plant would likely be natural gas or coal-fired and would contribute harmful emissions and other pollutants into the air and our waterways, inflict harm on our bountiful natural resources, and impair our emerging tourism industry. My opposition to the closing of the Perry Nuclear Power Plant is therefore based both on the belief that clean

nuclear energy should not be abandoned, and that the impact of a premature closure would harm our community in many ways that would be lengthy and difficult to rectify.

Time is running out. Our constituents are counting on you to come up with a reasonable legislative solution on their behalf. Let us not reflect on this moment five years from today and ask ourselves why we allowed a critical power source and economic engine to grind to a halt and jobs to leave our communities. I urge you to take prompt action to pass HB 6 to ensure our state continues to enjoy the economic benefits, environmental security, and reliability of our zero-emission nuclear power plants.

Thank you.

Jerry C. Cirino

Commission President, Lake County