

House Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy Generation
Chair Dick Stein and Chair Michael O'Brien
Opponent Testimony on House Bill 6
Testimony of Anastazia Vanisko

April 23, 2019

Chair Stein, Chair O'Brien, and Members of the Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy Generation, my name is Anastazia Vanisko, and I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today as an opponent to Ohio House Bill 6.

I see this bill has as a step backwards from the progress Ohio has made in renewable energy in the past few years. Based on the wording of the bill, it's obvious that much of the money that goes into this fund it creates will go to Ohio's two nuclear plants, and it's unclear if any of the wind or solar farms in Ohio are eligible for certification as a clean air resource. Furthermore, it allows for funds to be awarded to carbon-emitting plants for reducing their emissions, but it fails to specify how much they need to do to reduce said emissions. We could be awarding our worst polluters for doing the minimum amount required to reduce their emissions. The only thing that is truly clear about this bill is that it will gut funding for our renewable and energy efficiency programs.

As a recent college graduate, I work hard to make sound financial decisions to ensure that where I send my money reflects how much I value sustainability. I live in FirstEnergy territory, but I'm choosing to get my electricity from Cleveland Public Power instead. I'm not a FirstEnergy customer, yet my electric bill, along with those of other Clevelanders and Ohioans who have providers other than FirstEnergy, will be paying to keep open that company's unprofitable plants. FirstEnergy has pushed for bailouts of these plants for the past 20 years. That's how long these plants have been unprofitable—the past 20 years. If this bill passes, we're only putting off the inevitable by choosing to invest in a failing industry. We should instead be investing in Ohio's growing renewable and energy efficiency sectors by fixing the laws that are holding back renewable energy development in our state, such as our restrictive wind setback law, and continuing to push for stronger renewable and energy efficiency standards. But instead, we're discussing a bill that would strip money from those programs.

I want my money to go towards supporting long-term investments in sustainable sources of energy that also create sustainable jobs. It's important to me that I live in a state where I know the money I pay into my bills and taxes is supporting that sustainability, and as I begin to look into graduate schools that is definitely a factor I'm considering. I'd love to stay in Cleveland, and it's definitely a selling point to me that the renewable and energy efficiency fields in our state already employ thousands of Ohioans. When I pay into those renewable and energy efficiency charges on my electric bill, those are the people providing me with more efficient and cheaper energy. They're the ones doing the most to provide myself and all Ohioans with cleaner air. By

taking money away from our renewable and energy efficiency programs, we're telling everyone who works in those fields that their jobs don't matter.

I know it can be argued that the bill doesn't get rid of these programs, it just requires that folks opt-in to the charges. But in an increasingly electronic world, it's abnormal that a physical mailing is required to opt-in to the charges. When paying your electric bill can be as simple as an automatic deduction from your bank account every month, it's unclear how many people will even realize that they're no longer paying the charges for renewables and energy efficiency on their bills. The bill also fails to note how people will be notified that they need to opt-in and how the information to opt-in will be made available.

This opt-in requirement also places an additional burden on landlords and their tenants. Where I live, all the utilities are in my landlord's name. I'm lucky enough to currently have a landlord with very open lines of communication that I could talk to about opting-in to these charges. In the past, I have not been so lucky, and opting in to these charges would have been a much more complicated and drawn out process if my electric bill was in my landlord's name. Other people are not as lucky as I am now, and this would be a much more difficult process for them.

In conclusion, the requirement that we opt-in to standards is an unnecessarily burdensome feature of a bill that purports to promote cleaner air.