

Ohio House of Representatives
Energy and Natural Resource Subcommittee on Energy Generation
Opponent Testimony
House Bill 6

Leo Almeida, The Nature Conservancy in Ohio
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Co-chairmen Stein and O'Brien, and members of the Subcommittee on Energy Generation, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an opponent to House Bill 6. I am Leo Almeida and I am a climate and energy policy associate at The Nature Conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy is a non-partisan, science-based organization that seeks to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We work collaboratively with businesses, farmers, sportsmen groups, government and local communities to develop pragmatic, market-based solutions to conservation challenges, including air pollution. More than 65,000 Ohioans are Nature Conservancy supporters.

The Nature Conservancy commends the General Assembly for recognizing the importance of a lower carbon future and their desire to see Ohio make a positive contribution to this goal. We however, oppose House Bill 6 as we don't believe it is the best way to achieve that goal. This bill will effectively repeal Ohio's current renewable portfolio standards (RPS) and energy efficiency resource standards (EERS) and does not clearly demonstrate that all current sources of lower carbon or carbon free emissions will benefit equally from the Clean Air program resources. Simply put, this policy change would have negative economic, public health, and environmental impacts for our state.

Effectively gutting these standards moves Ohio in the wrong direction at a time when other states, such as Illinois and Michigan, have either raised or are exploring increases to their standards to drive clean energy and economic growth. Under the current RPS and EERS, clean energy has provided meaningful economic growth and market certainty during the years of enactment. According to the 2018 Clean Jobs Midwest Report released on April 9, 2019, "The clean energy industry in Ohio is a major employer with more than 112,486 jobs. In 2018, Ohio clean energy businesses added 4,975 jobs." While there may be a concern amongst policymakers that we haven't achieved enough return on investment from the current standards, HB6 does nothing to support the type of cost savings we have seen from the energy efficiency standards, which according to the utilities' annual PUCO reports have saved ratepayers \$5.1 billion since the inception of the standards.

In 2017, TNC released the *Clean and Green* report which profiled 16 very diverse small to large businesses across Ohio as they introduced and integrated renewable energy and energy efficiency to their operations. Businesses with recognizable names like Honda that are

committed and taking action toward a lower carbon future and others you may not have heard of like Little Fish Brewery that are seeking an edge to continue operating. Some use renewable energy to save on their monthly electric bills, while others are renewable energy businesses increasing the deployment of clean energy while creating jobs. After the release of this report, we took legislators to visit a few of these businesses in their districts. During one tour, the business owner explained to his State Senator and Representative that he formed his business after the establishment of the energy standards in 2008. He followed this issue closely and felt certain that with the almost unanimous support (only one no vote) of these standards, it was a safe bet to invest in Ohio. He now worries about his investments given the unpredictability of legislative efforts to freeze, weaken and now remove the standards. Although many of the businesses in the report described their decision to invest in clean energy as the right thing to do for the environment, all these companies point to economic benefits as the driving motivation for making the investment.

In July 2017, The Nature Conservancy commissioned a poll conducted by Public Opinion Strategies, on the attitudes of registered voters in Ohio toward clean energy. In response to legislative concerns about the lack of attention toward voters in coal country, we included an oversample of residents of Southeast Ohio. The poll results were very telling – a vast majority of Ohio voters support clean energy policies and nearly nine out of ten would tell an elected official to support policies that encourage greater use of renewable energy and energy efficiency in Ohio.

There was overwhelming support for placing a greater emphasis on energy efficiency, solar power, and wind power than on traditional energy sources. In addition, 79% of voters support Ohio reaching the 12.5% Renewable Portfolio Standard in its current form. Even in Southeastern Ohio where there was much less opposition to coal as a source of energy compared to the rest of the state, there was strong support for putting more emphasis on renewable energy.

Ohio is long overdue for a comprehensive energy policy that reflects the desire of Ohio voters to have more emphasis on renewable energy and energy efficiency. Unfortunately, instead of starting this legislative session with such a bill, we are here today discussing HB 6, which clearly provides a financial bailout for two nuclear powerplants in Ohio while eliminating the mechanism to support utilities' participation in the state's energy standards. A comprehensive energy plan is a complex issue that deserves careful consideration. We urge the General Assembly to postpone action on HB 6 to carefully address related issues such as the currently prohibitive wind energy setback rules, grid modernization, utility business models, electric vehicle infrastructure, and on-bill financing as part of a comprehensive energy bill.

TNC recognizes the importance of a lower carbon future and we realize nuclear power can provide benefits as a source of energy while the correct policies and incentives to encourage further growth in the renewable sector are implemented. We believe nuclear power can be an important source that should allow for increases in the proportion of energy supplied by

renewables rather than replace them. We would only support nuclear power facilities that meet these complementary needs and adhere to stringent safety and full-life cycle environmental standards that protect human health and the environment.

We have yet to hear a definitive answer to the many questions related to how HB 6 will benefit other sources of zero carbon emissions that as you heard me relate, Ohio voters believe in and want to see policymakers support. Let's not pass a short-sighted bill that, while rightly proposing a lower carbon future for Ohio does not respond to current and future demand for a forward-thinking energy portfolio. We stand ready to help the General Assembly create a comprehensive approach that reinforces lower carbon goals, encourages the economic benefits of clean energy, incentivizes new technology to address current challenges related to energy storage, removes impediments to growth and creates a win-win for Ohioans.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony as an opponent to HB 6. I am happy to address any questions you might have.

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