

Senate Energy and Utilities Committee
Chairman Steve Wilson
Opponent Testimony on Substitute House Bill 6
Testimony of Jeffrey J. Reinkemeyer
Director, Eastern Renewables Development, Avangrid Renewables LLC

June 18, 2019

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Senate Energy and Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. My name is Jeffrey J. Reinkemeyer, Director of Eastern Renewables Development, Avangrid Renewables (formerly Iberdrola Renewables). Our company is one of the largest owners and operators of commercial scale wind farms in the United States, including the Blue Creek wind farm in northwest Ohio. Blue Creek is a 152 turbine wind farm with 250 participating landowners and farmers in Van Wert and Paulding counties.

Avangrid Renewables is opposed to the substitute House Bill 6, which proposes to repeal the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard (“AEPS”), allows townships to require all OPSB certified wind projects in their township to be subject to a local referendum vote prior to final approval, and does not address the need to restore sensible and protective setback requirements for utility scale wind farms. Portfolio standard policies have proven to be cost effective policies to promote energy diversity by creating a competitive driver for clean, renewable energy investments. Avangrid Renewables respectfully requests that the committee revisit this provision and maintain the AEPS standard at its current level, as well as address the additional burdensome regulations (referendum and setback) mentioned above.

The Blue Creek wind farm is an example of the type of investment in which sound wind farm legislation and regulations can spur. Blue Creek was the single largest private investment in Ohio in 2011 at \$600 million, attracted to Ohio as opposed to a nearby state by this very AEPS. Thirty Ohio companies worked on its construction and for nearly seven years it has been providing clean energy and local benefits. The local benefits are significant. Blue Creek is the largest taxpayer in Van Wert County and has historically been the second largest taxpayer in Paulding County (another wind farm is the largest). The benefits flow to the local school districts which are investing in new technologies. The projects landowners also benefit. Landowner payments from the project currently total \$2.4 million annually.

Further, Avangrid Renewables currently has approximately 300 MW of wind energy and nearly 350 MW of solar energy projects currently in varying phases of development in Ohio, presenting the potential for an additional injection of millions of dollars into the largely rural communities that would host these projects. These investments would be put at risk with the passage of Substitute House Bill 6 in its present form.

As has been stated in previous testimony on the AEPS, since its inception the AEPS has proven to be a cost-effective market based approach for achievement of state electricity diversity goals. Speaking for myself, and as a lifelong conservative, I've seen how competitive, market-driven approaches like AEPS have driven down prices, created jobs, and benefitted schools, first responders, and local communities, exactly the goals the AEPS set out to achieve. Any proposed energy legislation should focus on creating a competitive framework for generators.

Additionally, Avangrid Renewables is opposed to the township referendum allowance in that it establishes a very troubling antibusiness precedent, zoning by public vote, with potential negative impact on other types of development in the future.

Finally, Avangrid Renewables believes that any legislation or discussion around energy policy must include fixing the highly restrictive wind turbine setbacks that have impeded development since 2014, and are very supportive of including sensible and protective minimum setback requirements that would enable responsible wind siting in Ohio in Substitute House Bill 6.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide this testimony in opposition to Substitute House Bill 6 as currently drafted and am happy to answer your questions regarding my testimony at this time.