



**House Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
Chairman Vitale, Vice Chair Kick, and Ranking Member Denson  
Opponent Testimony on Substitute House Bill 6  
Testimony of Rachael Belz  
Project Director, Ohio Consumers Power Alliance**

May 8, 2019

Chairman Vitale, Vice Chair Kick, and Members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Rachael Belz, and I am the Project Director for the Ohio Consumers Power Alliance. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today as an opponent to Substitute House Bill 6.

As I mentioned to some of you during testimony before the Energy Generation Subcommittee, the mission of the Ohio Consumers Power Alliance is to educate Ohio's energy consumers around opportunities to diversify Ohio's energy portfolio and policy actions that could impact consumer choice and spending. Substitute House Bill 6 takes Ohio's energy future in the wrong direction and flies in the face of what consumers in this state want from their energy spending.

While there have been some changes to the bill, the focus of the legislation remains the same—utilizing a creative approach to disguise a consumer-funded bailout of two old, outdated nuclear plants as a comprehensive energy policy to reduce carbon emissions. Every ratepayer in Ohio would be charged a monthly fee to subsidize FirstEnergy's failing investments.

At the same time, however, the bill sets limits, exemptions, and restrictions for renewable energy and energy efficiency programs that make it nearly impossible for real participation in the Ohio Clean Air Program. If that were not enough of a disincentive for clean energy development in Ohio, the legislation effectively repeals the state's renewable energy and energy efficiency standards, tying the hands of new technology companies that are creating jobs and saving consumers money. If consumers wish to continue their participation in these programs, they would have to opt-in to those efforts. They will now pay to support the clean energy standards they believe in and the monthly charge to bailout the state's nuclear power plants, serving up a double whammy to those consumers who truly want clean air and clean energy in Ohio.

As we all know, the cheapest form of energy is the energy we never use, which is the beauty of energy efficiency. Energy efficiency has not run its course in Ohio. According to the 2019 Midwest Clean Energy Jobs report, 81, 676 Ohioans are employed in the energy efficiency sector, an increase of 2.5 percent

over 2018, making it the largest sector of clean energy jobs in the state. Turning our backs on energy efficiency means consumer bills will increase—period.

When utilities eliminate efficiency programs, Ohioans will use more electricity, paying more every month and actually increasing carbon emissions. According to the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, clean energy programs have delivered utility-bill savings to customers to the tune of \$5.1 billion over the last decade and have resulted in the creation of new jobs. In fact, for every \$1 spent on energy efficiency, customers see \$2.65 in savings.

Now, awarding FirstEnergy with a bailout for their two aging nuclear power plants shifts the burden onto ratepayers rather than steering utilities toward less risky and less expensive clean energy options. We heard directly from a witness from FirstEnergy Solutions that these dollars would not be spent to update the technology used at the nuclear power plants, nor would they be spent to bring nuclear power into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ohio ratepayer dollars would be used to literally keep the lights on at the power plant. Ohioans deserve more.

Under Substitute HB 6, Ohio electric consumers will be required by law to pay \$300 million in the second year of this program and each subsequent year following to the state of Ohio, at least half of which will be used to bailout FirstEnergy Solutions. There are unanswered questions as to how the total dollar amount was determined and whether the amount expected to be used to subsidize the nuclear plants will even be enough. These are important questions for everyone to be asking before taking any action on this plan.

I am standing here today representing the Ohio consumer, a voice that is often mentioned but rarely heard in Ohio's energy debate. Our group is a project of the Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund, and we are almost exactly one month old. We formed initially around this issue, but we will continue to represent Ohio consumers once this issue is resolved. We are funded by our donors, supporters, and grants that are not and never have been provided by any utility or affiliated group. We know our fight against FirstEnergy's multiple attempts to saddle Ohio ratepayers with higher electric bills is a bit of a David and Goliath-scale battle. But we hope you will hear our opposition to this bill.

And we are not alone. As some of you may have noticed during proponent testimony in the subcommittee, over the course of nearly four hours, only those wanting to keep the two nuclear plants open testified. There was no support demonstrated by any other sector you say will benefit from this bill—no support from coal, natural gas, wind, solar, hydropower, or energy efficiency. Their absence was noticeable and should have you asking the question as to why a bill you say is not a bailout is only supported by those who want a bailout.

Our members remain staunchly opposed to rewarding FirstEnergy's bad business decisions by allowing them to dig deep into the pockets of Ohio ratepayers to cover the bill with no end in sight. We also remain deeply disappointed that that this legislation would reject energy innovation and job growth while keeping Ohio firmly planted in the dark ages of energy technology. The substitute version of the bill did nothing to change that. We still urge a NO vote on Substitute House Bill 6.

I appreciate your time and consideration today, I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.