



MID-OHIO REGIONAL
MORPC
PLANNING COMMISSION

**William Murdock, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission Executive Director
House Energy & Natural Resources Committee
Written Opponent Testimony
May 8, 2019**

Chair Vitale, Vice Chair Kick and Ranking Member Denson and members of the House Energy & Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written opponent testimony on House Bill 6 (HB 6).

My name is William Murdock and I am the executive director of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission or MORPC. MORPC is a regional council of over 60 communities across Central Ohio's rural, suburban, and urban areas. We provide programs, services, and funding related to transportation, land use, data, energy, sustainability, and economic prosperity.

In Central Ohio, energy is key to the economic growth and success of the region, which is on track to be a region of three million people along with adding 300,000 new housing units and 300,000 new jobs. To sustain this growth and plan for prosperity, MORPC pursues sustainability solutions that protect and conserve our natural resources and promote a diverse supply of clean, affordable, and reliable sources of energy for our growing region. Furthermore, we seek the integration of energy efficiency, conservation, and renewable energy for a more balanced, cleaner, and diverse energy portfolio. These goals are reflected in MORPC's Public Policy Agenda and Regional Sustainability Agenda and strongly supported by our local government members. Put simply HB 6 is not consistent with these goals. Therefore, MORPC opposes HB 6 in its current state.

Areas of Concern

MORPC is concerned with the following provisions of the bill:

- **The bill would eliminate low-income benefits from the Energy Efficiency program:**
We are concerned that HB 6 includes a provision that automatically opts electric utility customers out of all PUCO energy efficiency programs that were created just over ten years ago to comply with the energy efficiency standards established by this body in prior legislation. Consequently, this provision results in the elimination of consistent funding for energy efficiency programs that benefit low-income families and older adults. MORPC offers home energy efficiency and safety services at no cost to income-eligible residents to help keep them warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer, all while lowering energy bills. These programs are provided at no-cost to income-eligible clients thanks to funding from our partners. Should this language not be amended, our

residential services team will not be able to effectively administer this program to the people who need it the most. Ohio's delivery of home weatherization energy efficiency programs, financed through the electric utility bill riders that HB 6 would eliminate, have proven to be successful in saving people money. A weatherized home saves customers roughly two months of electric bills and these customers are more likely to pay their bills and less likely to need to enroll bill payment assistance programs such as Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) that are financed by riders on the bill of non-PIPP electric customers. Therefore, electric utility ratepayers also save money.

- **Replace Ohio's existing energy efficiency standards and renewable energy credits (REC) with a new billing rider:** As a membership driven agency, the local governments that comprise our board are concerned that a lack of required standards would cause a delay in the state's progress toward diversifying our energy portfolio through improved energy efficiency and greater use of renewable energy. Some may argue the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) program has not performed as the creators hoped, yet due to uncertainty from prior legislation such as SB 310 and a lack of enforceable, metric-driven standards creates further market uncertainty and hurts economic development efforts. Central Ohio has missed opportunities where Fortune 500 companies have chosen to locate their business facilities to other U.S. States that share their sustainable energy policies and values.
- **Customers can only participate in energy efficiency standards or the renewable portfolio standard if they opt in rather than opting out:** The vast body of utility experience illustrates that switching programs from opt-out to opt-in leads to a drastic reduction in participation rates, since few people choose to pay more even if they support the services the surcharges provide. The bill, as written, would do this by declaring that Ohio's existing monthly charges for renewable energy, energy efficiency and peak demand reduction are now "opt-in" rather than "opt-out" charges on residential and commercial customers' utility bills.

Thank you again for the opportunity to express MORPC's opposition to HB 6. As businesses analyze the suitability of Central Ohio as a location for their new or expanded business operations, the abundance and stability of energy – particularly in a quickly growing region – will be an important factor for continued growth. Diversifying the energy generation portfolio to include energy efficiency and renewable energy are needed tools for our competitive advantage as a region and a state.

Thank you for your consideration of these items of concern. We look forward to continuing our important work together. Please do not hesitate to contact me, at 614-233-4101 or at wmurdock@morpc.org with any questions or whenever MORPC can be of assistance.

Kind Regards,



William Murdock
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