

From: Michael Melampy, 143 Westbridge, Berea, OH 44017



To: Ohio House Public Utilities Committee

Re: SB 33

Date: 27 January 2020

I am writing to express my opposition to SB 33 (*Modify criminal and civil law for critical infrastructure damage*). My opposition stems from the fact that the bill is unnecessary in that Ohio has other means for protecting "critical infrastructure," e.g. criminal trespass laws, and from my concern about its impact on the activities of grass roots organizations composed primarily of volunteers and operating on small budgets.

The very punitive penalties meted out to organizations deemed complicit in infrastructure violations makes this bill unusual. Repeatedly, the bill states that organizations found guilty of complicity "shall be punished with a fine that is ten times the maximum fine that can be imposed on an individual for." Under these provisions, grass roots organizations that are involved with legitimate protests could easily find themselves charged with complicity and facing a very large fine for even trivial infractions, such as a protester wandering inadvertently into a restricted area. Consequently, many organizations may shy away from organizing protests. This is especially true of the smaller organizations whose limited resources would prevent them from engaging in litigation. In effect, this bill will serve to suppress first amendment rights that we depend upon to protect ourselves from all sorts of abuses. Without organized protest and the light such protest shines on abuse, the very nation in which we live would never have been established.

I urge you to reconsider this bill. It is clearly something that is not needed in Ohio as we have adequate laws to deal with trespassing and vandalism. Most importantly, this bill would generate a great deal of lasting harm by infringing upon our constitutional rights. PLEASE VOTE TO DEFEAT SB 33.