

Chair Hoops, Vice Chair Abrams, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Select Committee on Energy Policy & Oversight, my name is William David Hardie. I am submitting this written only testimony as an opponent of HB 798.

I am a pediatric pulmonologist who has worked 30 years in Cincinnati. My reason for sending this is to provide a first-hand testimony on the impacts of air pollution on human health, and HB 798 does nothing to improve our air quality. In my practice I see children with a variety of respiratory ailments. These illnesses range from common disorders such as asthma to less common, but equally if not more severe, respiratory ailments such as cystic fibrosis, chronic lung disease of children born prematurely, and children who are dependent on ventilators from a host of other conditions. I can say with absolute conviction that the air quality directly impacts the health of all these children. I have seen children worsen in days when our air quality is poor. The parents of my patients consistently report their children struggle when the air quality index worsens.

What I am telling you is nothing novel and has been reported again and again in hosts of epidemiological studies. In fact, two years ago researchers from The University of Cincinnati, and Cincinnati Children's Hospital, demonstrated an association between increased exposure to air pollution during the conception period for pregnant women living in Ohio and increased birth defects. The impact of air pollution on lung health extends to beyond vulnerable children and impacts everyone. Just last month, researchers from Germany, London and Harvard published findings which estimated air pollution increased mortality from Covid-19 by 17% in North America. These findings illustrate that future threats to our respiratory health will invariably continue and may accelerate. Which is exactly why we absolutely must make changes for that which we can control including exploring more clean, renewable energy sources for Ohio.

I understand the need to consider and balance the costs of cleaner air with the benefits. Many argue that the economic cost of renewable energy is cost prohibitive. However, the cost-benefit of clean air initiatives has already been studied by the federal environmental protection agency and shown that for every dollar invested in improving air quality society will save over 30 dollars in medical care costs. Benjamin Franklin's axiom of an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is as true today as it was 250 years ago.

I was born and raised in southwestern Ohio and extremely proud of the great accomplishments over the past 200 years from so many Ohio natives. While the circumstances leading to the passage of House Bill 6 are a blemish on our state's reputation, I feel you have been given a unique and enviable opportunity to flip an unfortunate event into passing legislation which will improve the health of Ohioans statewide. Unfortunately, you have chosen to allow the blemish to remain, although just delayed a year, through HB 798, which does nothing to correct or improve policies for renewable energy and energy efficiency. These policies, which improve air quality are undoubtedly wise and essential investments for everyone's physical and economic health. As a pediatric pulmonologist and advocate for children's health, I call on this committee and all of Ohio's legislators to protect Ohioans' right to clean air by rejecting HB 798 and instead fully repeal HB 6 by supporting House Bill 738, House Bill 746 and Senate Bill 346.