



House Select Committee on Energy Policy & Oversight  
Chairman Jim Hoops  
OCCA Opponent Testimony on House Bill 798  
December 3, 2020

Chair Hoops, Vice Chair Abrams, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Select Committee on Energy Policy & Oversight, thank you for allowing Ohio Clinicians for Climate Action (OCCA), to provide written opposition testimony to House Bill 798 (HB 798).

OCCA is an advocacy organization of more than 150 doctors, nurses, and other health professionals across Ohio, founded by physicians, who recognize that their oath to do no harm encompasses more than just the patients they treat. We joined a growing national movement of clinicians and health professionals who recognize that climate change is already impacting the health of the patients and communities we all serve and advocate for climate change solutions that protect the health of our patients and communities.

While we wish we could join you in person for this important debate, the impacts of Covid-19 have made it necessary to alter the way we live and work in order to prevent more cases of illness. To promote public health, and to help slow the spread of this virus, which is transmitted through the air via droplets and also through touch contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth, a virtual option for live, “in-person” testimony is a safe, effective, and responsible option that would allow more Ohioans to participate safely in the legislative process.

The OCCA is opposed to HB 798 because it fails to repeal House Bill 6 (HB 6) in full.

Many of Ohio’s health professionals have been concerned about the chilling effect HB 6 has had on Ohio’s transition to a clean and renewable energy economy, ultimately harming our public health by increasing air pollution and contributing to climate change. During the current respiratory pandemic, we are seeing now that air pollution worsens COVID-19 outcomes, which underscores the importance of safeguarding cleaner air for all Ohioans, now and in the future. The OCCA calls on this committee and the Ohio legislature to reject HB 798, repeal the corruptly passed HB 6, and turn its attention to investing in a clean energy future for Ohioans’ health.

The continuation of HB 6 policies through HB 798 have negative health impacts on all Ohioans:

- Ohio's [clean energy standards were on track to reduce Ohio's annual carbon pollution by approximately 10 million tons between 2017 and 2029](#)—the equivalent to avoiding emissions from the annual electricity consumption of 1 million homes.
- Ohioans will experience dirtier air, and we won't receive the projected health benefits that the clean energy standards provided—[prevention of over 44,000 asthma attacks, 4,400 heart attacks, over 2,800 premature deaths and more](#)—all attributable to coal-plant pollution.
- Each year, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America [ranks](#) U.S. cities based on three health outcomes: asthma prevalence, asthma-related emergency department visits and asthma-related mortality rates. The report also looks at eight risk factors that can affect asthma rates: poverty, lack of health insurance, poor air quality, pollen counts, long-term control medicine use, quick-relief medicine use, smoking laws and access to specialists.
  - Of the 100 cities ranked as the most challenging cities to live with asthma, Ohio has 5 cities that rank in the top 20
  - Two Ohio cities - Dayton (2) and Cleveland (5) - rank in the top 5
- As health care professionals, we see the impacts of climate change on our patients every day: worsened air quality, longer and more intense allergy season, more severe heat waves, and extreme precipitation events. Changing patterns of infectious disease, and water quality issues (like toxic algae in NW Ohio) also affect Ohioans' health.
- The direct contribution of fossil fuel combustion to air pollution contributes to asthma exacerbations, poor birth outcomes like low birth weight and prematurity (both risk factors for infant mortality), and neurodevelopmental toxicity – harming kids' learning, cognition, and behavior, putting them at higher risk for school failure and lifelong impacts on productivity & quality of life.

We have data to support the fact that when comparing the return on investment in clean energy across US regions, Great Lakes and Upper Midwest stand to benefit the most, when health and economic benefits are considered. In other words – at this urgent moment for climate action, Ohio's citizens stand to benefit the most from accelerating our transition to clean and renewable energy, from immediate and sustained improvement in our public health. Climate solutions ARE health solutions – transitioning to clean and renewable energy, and ensuring cleaner air, have immediate benefits to our health and our children's health.

So of all places in the country, WE here in Ohio need to be leading the way on clean air and climate action. Ohio's clinicians are concerned about HB798's provisions that keep the roll back of our state's energy efficiency and renewable portfolio standards in place. We are concerned about its only delaying taxpayer funded bailouts of aging nuclear facilities, dirty coal plants, and utilities that are actively seeking to hold us back in our state's clean energy transition. We also

know that a healthy democracy is important for a healthy state – and we're concerned about the corruption of HB6's passage undermining the health of our democracy.

For the sake of Ohio's health, especially our children, we need to reject HB 798 repeal HB6 without delay.