

BEFORE THE HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENERGY POLICY AND OVERSIGHT

REPRESENTATIVE JIM HOOPS
CHAIR

INTERESTED PARTY TESTIMONY OF
DR. JACK THOMPSON,
SUPERINTENDENT OF PERRY LOCAL SCHOOLS, LAKE COUNTY,
ON HB 798

DECEMBER 3, 2020

Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Abrams, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Select Committee on Energy Policy and Oversight, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on House Bill 798. My name is Jack Thompson and I am the Superintendent of the Perry Local Schools.

Perry Local is located in Lake County, Ohio, which is the home of the Perry Nuclear Power Plant. The plant employs around 700 people, many who are family members of children within our school district. We, like many of you, have fought hard over the threats of a plant closure and for the jobs and energy benefits of House Bill 6. This bill was important to protect the nuclear plants that employ thousands in our region, produce the majority of the clean energy for the State of Ohio, lower electric bills by removing the renewable portfolio and energy efficiency riders, and protect a tax base that helps fund our students' education.

Without the nuclear plants in our community, Perry Schools would have no way to replace the tax base that the plant provides. Our district is made up of a mixture of blue and white collar, hardworking people with a median income that sits below \$40,000. In rural Perry, we have a nuclear power plant, a school district, and a few small businesses. Our school district and the plant are the largest employers in our community. The Nuclear Power plant represents over 20% of total employment in Perry. The Perry Local School District is the second largest employer within our territory. The Perry Joint Fire District requires a larger than normal safety force and additional training to serve the Nuclear Power Plant. It is not that we haven't continued to strive for economic development in our town. It was quite a celebration a couple years ago when we were able to land a Dairy Queen but, there are still no golden arches in Perry.

Nuclear power plant school districts are unlike any other school districts around the state. We are unique because our largest taxpayer is also the reason why other potential tax contributors do not move to our communities like they would other surrounding towns. A nuclear power plant, while beneficial in many ways, does not attract other businesses (like an automotive plant), that when given a choice, will set up shop in a place with less risk.

Over the past several years, we have consistently come to Columbus to ensure our story is heard and we are so grateful that you have listened. Our revenues are declining from plant devaluations and from the public utility valuations being wrapped up into the TPP, which is a constant target to be phased out. We have tried to explain the unique features of a nuclear power plant district and have only ever asked that our revenues be frozen, not increased or decreased. This is why we have continued to advocate for the freezing of the tangible personal property tax for a nuclear power plant district as provided for in HB 6.

We were appreciative of the legislature's efforts in HB 6 to limit the ability for the owner of the nuclear power plants to further devalue the plants for the years in which they would receive the nuclear resource credit payments. It is our understanding that HB 798 would not impact this provision, which is essential in our district's long-term planning. We ask that this provision remain untouched in any future versions of legislation.

We believe that HB 6 is good law for everyone and, whereas we do not condone any alleged misdoings of some who were proponents of the law, we certainly believe that the law was passed

by many based on the merits of the bill. We do, however, understand the legislature's desire to review the legislation. Our school district asks that no matter the final decisions made by this body, that you keep in mind our schools. It is our belief that any action on this issue can be done in a way that holds our funding levels harmless, therefore, allowing us to continue employing our teachers, maintaining our facilities, and providing the best possible education for Ohio's future—our students.

We understand that this bill goes beyond our desires as a school district and we are appreciative of this committee's commitment to use such a deliberative process that allows input from all parties; even while living through a pandemic.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the perspective of the Perry Local School District. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.