

Eric Meyer

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Ohio House Committee on Energy & Natural Resources Subcommittee on Generation

Chairman Stein and members of the House Energy & Natural Resources Subcommittee on Generation, thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Eric Meyer, and I am the Founder and Executive Director of Generation Atomic, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization working to energize and empower today's generations to advocate for a nuclear future, save today's nuclear reactors, and lay the groundwork for deploying the reactors of tomorrow. Thank you for this opportunity to explain why we so strongly support passage of House Bill 6.

The creation of the Ohio Clean Air Program as proposed in House Bill 6 will support and encourage clean energy generation—including nuclear generation—which will help to lower electric bills for Ohio utility customers, sustain and create good jobs, support a vibrant economy, and improve our environment, all while providing the clean energy Ohioans need to run their lives and livelihoods.

Since our founding in 2016, Generation Atomic has worked hard to engage stakeholders at all levels to create a loud, effective, and sustainable pro-nuclear constituency. This community building is at the heart of Generation Atomic's grassroots organizing and advocacy. As part of this work, we often undertake door-to-door canvassing, which gives us a first-hand understanding of the wide breadth and compelling depth of support nuclear energy enjoys in our communities.

In total, we've knocked on 43,000 doors in Ohio, and learned convincingly that there is a lot of support for nuclear energy generation in the Buckeye State, as well as for saving Ohio's two remaining nuclear plants, the Davis-Besse nuclear station near Toledo and the Perry nuclear plant near Cleveland. Over the course of four months, we talked to thousands of people in different communities across the state, exploring cities big and small, and attending county fairs to talk to people about the importance of saving these plants.

The message they sent couldn't be clearer: they support nuclear energy, especially once educated about the role it plays and its benefits.

Each conversation started more or less like this: "Hi there, my name is Eric and I'm out here talking to your neighbors about the prospect of the nuclear plant closing down early. You see, those plants produce about 4,000 jobs, 90% of the clean energy in the state, and millions in funding for our schools. Which of those things are most important to you?" At that point we started talking about values, and what's at stake for the community. And that's where Ohioans really became engaged.

What little opposition we saw didn't really come from specific resistance to nuclear technology, but instead from people not being aware of what nuclear did, and, in the short time we had them at the door, we were able to articulate why it was so important to protect the Davis-Besse and Perry plants. The bottom line? When people are informed about what these nuclear plants do for the environment and the benefits they bring to our communities, they wanted them to stay in place and active.

Back to why I'm here today. The Ohio Clean Air Program is forward thinking and promotes the right policies on numerous issues, from air quality impacts, cost concerns, and consumer considerations to supporting Ohio's economy. Thinking about how energy affects our air, every time a nuclear plant shuts down, the slack has to be picked up by fossil fuel-based generation in the state—natural gas, coal etc. And whenever we burn fossil fuels we send more particulates up into the air and into the lungs of kids playing on a playground, or elderly folks out for a stroll. Clean energy is a much better and safer option.

By promoting clean energy production, House Bill 6 will help lower Ohio's carbon footprint and minimize air pollution—as well as provide hundreds of millions of dollars for clean and reduced energy emission resources on an annual basis. And when it comes to Ohio's economy and supporting Ohio families and businesses, promoting clean energy and keeping nuclear in the mix is the obvious path forward. Nuclear energy will promote continued energy diversity, helping to protect consumers and businesses from price volatility. House Bill 6 also helps ensure a stable grid in a world with increasingly unpredictable weather, and will help consumers cut costs—saving Ohio electricity millions each year. It will also help save thousands of jobs that are directly or indirectly associated with existing clean energy production in Ohio, as well as create new jobs.

Our existing energy policy is in desperate need of reform. Supporting the generation of clean energy through passage of the Ohio Clean Air Program is the right thing for Ohio, its citizens, its businesses—and our future. I urge this committee to support this legislation and move it forward so it can be put to work for Ohio as soon as possible.