



**Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
Chairman Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, and Ranking Member Williams
Opponent Testimony on House Bill 6
Testimony of Rachael Belz
Ohio Consumers Power Alliance**

June 18, 2019

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Energy and Public Utilities Committee, my name is Rachael Belz, and I am the Project Director for the Ohio Consumers Power Alliance, a project of the Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund dedicated to educating Ohio's energy consumers around opportunities to diversify Ohio's energy portfolio and policy actions that could impact consumer choice and spending. Our members are opposed to House Bill 6.

The legislation you are considering takes Ohio's energy future in the wrong direction and flies in the face of what consumers in this state want from their energy spending. Every ratepayer would be charged a monthly fee to subsidize FirstEnergy's failing investments, period. This consumer-funded bailout does nothing to update the technology used at the nuclear or coal power plants, nor would the funds be spent to bring Ohio's energy into the 21st century. It maintains the status quo.

The bill does not expand Ohio's renewable energy standards or cost-saving energy efficiency measures, instead it repeals them, tying the hands of new technology companies that are creating jobs and saving consumers money.

As we all know, the cheapest form of energy is the energy we never use, which is the beauty of energy efficiency. Energy efficiency has not run its course in Ohio. According to the 2019 Midwest Clean Energy Jobs report, 81, 676 Ohioans are employed in the energy efficiency sector, an increase of 2.5 percent over 2018, making it the largest sector of clean energy jobs in the state. Turning our backs on energy efficiency means consumer bills will increase and that jobs growth will suffer.

When utilities eliminate efficiency programs, Ohioans will use more electricity, paying

more every month and actually increasing carbon emissions. According to the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, clean energy programs have delivered utility-bill savings to customers to the tune of \$5.1 billion over the last decade and have resulted in the creation of new jobs. In fact, for every \$1 spent on energy efficiency, customers see \$2.65 in savings.

Now, awarding FirstEnergy with a bailout for their aging coal and nuclear power plants shifts the burden onto ratepayers rather than steering utilities toward less risky and less expensive clean energy options. We heard directly from a witness from FirstEnergy Solutions that these dollars would not be spent to update the technology used at the power plants. Ohio ratepayer dollars would be used to literally keep the lights on at the power plants. They also are not certain the dollars being requested will be enough and they may even need to come back to the legislature and ask consumers for more in the future. Ohioans deserve more.

I am standing here today representing the Ohio consumer, a voice that is often mentioned but rarely heard in Ohio's energy debate. Our group is a project of the Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund, and we are almost exactly three months old. We formed initially around this issue, but we will continue to represent Ohio consumers once this issue is resolved. We are funded by our donors, supporters, and grants that are not and never have been provided by any utility or affiliated group. We know our fight against FirstEnergy's multiple attempts to saddle Ohio ratepayers with higher electric bills is a bit of a David and Goliath-scale battle. But we hope you will hear our opposition to this bill.

Our members remain staunchly opposed to rewarding FirstEnergy's bad business decisions by allowing them to dig deep into the pockets of Ohio ratepayers to cover the bill with no end in sight. We also remain deeply disappointed that that this legislation would reject energy innovation and job growth while keeping Ohio firmly planted in the dark ages of energy technology.

Will you take this opportunity to develop a comprehensive, innovative energy plan for Ohio that promotes job growth, saves consumers money, and actually reduces harmful emissions? Or will you pass this bill and use an indefinite stream of ratepayer dollars to prop up a for-profit corporation while turning your back on Ohio's clean energy development? This is our chance to take a step back and get it right. We strongly urge a NO vote on House Bill 6.

I appreciate your time today, I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.