

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
Chairman Steve Wilson
Opponent Testimony on Substitute House Bill 6
Testimony of Jennifer Weissman

June 16, 2019

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, my name is Jennifer Weissman, a citizen of Ohio and registered voter. I thank you for the opportunity to address you as an opponent to Substitute House Bill 6.

I have lived in northeastern Ohio for most of my life. I have a college education and work hard but do not have much money. I do not receive government assistance and manage to get by by living extremely frugally. I do not indulge in luxuries such as meals in restaurants or cable television. I don't use air conditioning in summer or set my thermostat above sixty-five in winter. Education, hard work, and thrift – so I was taught growing up – would lead to prosperity. This has turned out not to be the case, and I have discovered one of the reasons for this.

Some of my bills are exorbitant and through no fault of my own - my electric bill from First Energy especially so. I am willing to pay my fair share, but what I am charged is ludicrous. Having had this company as my electric provider for the last two decades, I have become familiar with some of their practices. They have come to us, their customers, time and time again demanding “bailout” money. It is my understanding that First Energy has made eleven billion dollars in the last twenty years from these bailouts. Now, through HB6, they are asking for yet another bailout.

This leads me to ask the following questions: How poorly has this multibillion-dollar corporation handled its finances that it deems it necessary to demand these handouts? What kind of ethical guidelines – or lack thereof – makes First Energy executives think it is in any way appropriate or conscionable to force the many hardworking yet cash-strapped Ohioans to part with our hard earned money to fill their coffers? And lastly, just how out of touch with the will of their constituents and the principles of capitalism are the state legislators who support this bill that they would consider for even one moment supporting this anti-capitalist corporate welfare bill?

I appreciate your time and consideration and would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.