



Audubon | GREAT LAKES

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
Chairman Steve Wilson
Opponent Testimony on Substitute House Bill 6
Testimony of Marnie Urso
Policy Director, Audubon Great Lakes

June 17, 2019

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, I am Marnie Urso, the Policy Director for the National Audubon Society's Great Lakes Office. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today in opposition to Substitute HB 6 on behalf of Audubon's 40,000 members in Ohio.

Ohio harbors some of the most important places of any Midwestern state for birds – our biodiversity plays an integral role in supporting over 400 species, either by being on their migratory path or by providing breeding habitat. From the prairies in the west, to unglaciated Appalachian plateaus to the south and east, and our great Lake Erie in the north—our state is critical to the health and vitality of birds and wildlife. In addition to being important for the quality of life for Ohioans, birds are important pollinators for our agriculture industry and birds support local business.

Birds also tell us that we must take action to combat climate change. [Audubon's Birds and Climate Report](#) found that more than half of all North American bird species are endangered or threatened by climate change if global warming exacerbated by carbon emissions continues at its current pace. By 2080, Ohio will no longer be suitable for many species and they will be forced north in desperate search of adequate habitat if we do not address this problem head on.

Ohio's renewable energy standards and energy efficiency standards have been helping reduce carbon emissions while delivering significant net benefits to consumers since they were first enacted in 2008. Ohio made a commitment to reduce harmful emissions and propel our state and economy into the future. This was a big win for birds, wildlife and Ohio's rich natural heritage.

House Bill 6 will reverse the progress made by Ohio's clean energy program and put at risk the more than 112,000 clean energy jobs that currently exist in the state. This will result in more fossil fuel energy use and put more harmful emissions in our air. This legislation is not the investment in clean air, sustainable jobs and economic growth that our state deserves. While it

can be beneficial to have nuclear power as part of carbon-free energy mix, a bill that bails out two aging nuclear power plants at the expense of our renewable energy and energy efficiency program does not address the need for a long-term comprehensive energy policy and low-carbon future.

A study conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2006 estimated that 2.4 million Ohioans watched birds and that 3.5 million “wildlife watchers” spent \$2 billion dollars here for equipment, supplies, and travel. Close to 100,000 people from 32 countries visit the western basin of Lake Erie to spend \$40 million in northwest Ohio to enjoy our birds as they prepare to cross Lake during spring migration.

Future generations may never know the fiery red of a Scarlet Tanager or the bubbly buzzes and trills of a Bobolink. That’s not only a terrible loss for nature, but also a detrimental impact to the economic health of Ohio’s communities.

Energy efficiency and renewable energy are vital components to protecting Ohio’s birds and wildlife from the threat of climate change and to ensuring all Ohioans have access to safe and affordable energy. The National Audubon Society urges members of the General Assembly to take this opportunity to lead on energy policy, not put the state in reverse. HB 6 is a missed opportunity for the legislature to begin working on a comprehensive energy policy for our state and moves Ohio in the wrong direction. I appreciate your time and consideration.

The National Audubon Society’s mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth’s biological diversity. The Audubon Society is working to protect the 314 bird species in North America whose future is threatened by climate change.

Learn more at www.Audubon.org/ohio-climate