



# Ohio Citizen Action

*The premier grassroots mobilizing and organizing team in the Midwest*

Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee  
Chair Steve Wilson  
Opponent Testimony on House Bill 6  
Testimony of Melissa K. English  
Deputy Director, Ohio Citizen Action

June 11, 2019

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair McColley and Members of the Energy & Public Utilities Committee, my name is Melissa English and I'm the Deputy Director of Ohio Citizen Action. I thank you for the opportunity to present our opposition to Ohio House Bill 6.

I speak to you today on behalf of Ohio Citizen Action's 32,000 members and all Ohio utility ratepayers who have a stake in the decision before you. Ohio Citizen Action has fought for fair utility rates since the mid-1970s. In the mid-1980s we successfully curbed "construction work in progress" payments designed to shift the pain of unexpected cost increases from shareholders to consumers who had not even used a watt of energy from the power plants they were subsidizing. I raise this example because HB 6 proposes a similar, unfair burden on the many Ohioans who don't pay FirstEnergy for their electricity and because it perpetuates a pattern of externalizing costs to consumers that should appropriately be borne by shareholders.

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Despite the addition of the two OVEC coal-fired power plants and the systematic exclusion of most solar and wind projects, proponents of this bill claim it's a "clean air bill" that will reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality and decrease consumers' utility bills. We question those claims. We especially question how those noble goals will be met by defunding existing programs promoting clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency programs, as HB 6 proposes. Ohio's energy efficiency programs saved customers \$1 billion on their bills from 2009 until they were frozen in 2014 and the cost of providing renewable energy like wind and solar has fallen 69% and 88% respectively, since 2009. In the same period, coal and nuclear costs have risen 9% and 23% respectively.

(source: Lazard's 2018 Cost of Levelized Energy Report (<https://www.lazard.com/perspective/levelized-cost-of-energy-and-levelized-cost-of-storage-2018/>)).

Why should Ohioans pay to interfere with market forces and competition that are clearly not only already improving air quality, but also saving customers money?

Ohio Citizen Action prides itself as the premier grassroots mobilizing and organizing team in the Midwest. We get out into communities across Ohio 52 weeks per year, educating and organizing on environmental and consumer issues. I was a field canvasser myself and I can tell you that Ohioans are not stupid and they know what's in their interest and what is not. When we knock on doors, we ask people to take action on the issue we share with them, usually it's a letter or a phone call. We collect those letters and we observe them make those phone calls so we can document our impact and so we can hold decision makers like yourselves accountable to the people of this state.

I'm proud to say that just since we've begun working on HB 6, 4,237 Ohioans have called or written letters to your colleagues in the House opposing the

bill. And now you shall hear from them. Those people and thousands of others who feel the same can't leave their jobs and responsibilities to appear before you today. They can't treat you to a meal or a ballgame and casually bring up the nuclear bailout bill as they get to know you better. And most of them can't contribute money to your re-election campaign. But those people have read editorials about HB 6 in their newspapers. They've seen the slick, deceptive ads on their evening news broadcasts and opened mailers paid for by Generation Now. And they've sent me here to tell you they are paying attention to this issue and they know what it's about.

To sum up, we question the assertion that HB6 is the best investment Ohio could make to improve air quality and save consumers money. We oppose defunding the state's RPS and EERS programs which actually do improve air quality and save consumers money. We oppose spreading the pain of FirstEnergy's poor business decisions to all Ohio ratepayers. And we urge the members of this committee to vote against HB 6.

Thank you for your time and consideration today; I'd be glad to answer any questions you may have.