

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

June 15, 2019

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, my name is Sophia Avouris, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today as an opponent to Substitute House Bill 6.

I am a recent graduate of Kent State University and I have lived in Ohio for the last 14 years. This state has been one I am proud to live in, one that I want to work in, and one that I am willing to fight to improve. When I read into what Substitute House Bill 6 would do, I was shocked. In a state where schools struggle from underfunding, the idea that taxes would be raised, not to improve education or some other worthwhile cause, but to bail out First Energy for their poor business decisions is outrageous. The incoherent decision-making process behind the idea that consumers should bear the costs of unnecessary, ineffectual power plants shows the disregard this legislature has for the citizens it should be representing.

Not only is this bill offering First Energy a bailout, it shows this legislature's commitment to keep these inefficient plants open, regardless of the cost to consumers. Estimates show that in 4-5 years, First Energy would be back again, asking for another bailout to keep these plants running. Ohio consumers should not have to pay the price for First Energy's faulty business model, especially when the energy produced in those plants is not necessary to sustain Ohio's electrical grid. Proponents of this bill claim it will increase our commitment to renewable energy in Ohio. When a bill makes it harder for investment in true renewables like wind and solar to come to Ohio, while at the same time bailing out coal plants, the argument for clean energy is laughable.

As I mentioned earlier, I am a recent graduate who plans to stay in this state. I am already struggling with my student loan debt on top of my other living expenses. An increase in my electrical rates, in combination with decreased investment in cleaner and renewable energy, would make me seriously consider moving out of state. Clean energy is one of the fastest growing industries in the US. Ohio can be a leader in it, the same way it was a leader in coal. But this bill hinders that possibility.

I strongly urge you to vote against Substitute House Bill 6 and increase investment in truly renewable energy sources here in Ohio. This state does not need to raise utility bills to provide corporate welfare in the form of subsidies for First Energy.

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