

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
Chairman Steve Wilson
Opponent Testimony on Substitute House Bill 6
Testimony of Tom Schock
Cleveland Power of Wind Action Team
Written Testimony only

June 17, 2019

Chairman Steve Wilson, Vice Chairman Rob McColley, and Members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, my name is Tom Schock with the Cleveland Power of Wind Action Team. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today as an opponent to Ohio Substitute House Bill 6.

On April 24th, I along with two friends drove to Columbus to testify before the House Subcommittee on Energy Generation. I was actually the last person to testify at about 6:40 pm. As a proponent of wind energy, I am very familiar with the impact the 2014 amendment to the wind turbine setback has had on the economy of the state. Having sat and listened to over eight hours of testimony from all manner of folks from fossil fuel companies to economists, I was amazed that subsequent to two full days of opponent testimony, there were no real changes to HB 6 that benefits renewable energy. In fact, subsequent changes stripped out all support for renewable.

The fact that the bill is called “The Ohio Clean Air Program” is ironic in that it will actually result in more dirty air and the loss of over 81,000 jobs for those Ohioans employed in the energy efficiency and renewable sectors. FirstEnergy is currently running ads urging people to call their legislators to support clean air. Everyone wants clean air, so let’s make it a truly clean air program!

The Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Plant came on-line in 1978 and the original operating license was set to expire in 2017. Over the past 40 years, it has had numerous safety violations, including the discovery of a football-sized hole that had eaten into the head of the reactor vessel in 2002. This problem kept the plant off line for over 2 years. **According to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Davis–Besse has been the source of two of the top five most dangerous nuclear incidents in the United States since 1979.**

Even if we ignore the safety issues, **House Bill 6 should be about transitioning to a cleaner, more sustainable future for Ohio.** As Socrates once said: “The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new”.

With the rapid advances in wind and solar technology, they are now the cheapest form of unsubsidized power to produce. That’s right, wind and solar farms are even less expensive than natural gas. I have a chart included with my testimony produced by Lazard, who is one of the

world's leading financial advisory and asset management firms. The chart shows the unsubsidized cost to produce various forms of energy. Clearly, wind and solar are the least expensive forms of energy to produce. Why? One reason is the costs have dropped substantially in the last 10 years - 69% for wind and 88% for solar. Secondly, once the solar panels or wind turbines are in place, there is no cost for the fuel; the wind and sun are free! **A recent article in Forbes confirmed this fact: unsubsidized wind and solar are the least expensive energy to produce.**

I am sure many of you are thinking that renewable are heavily subsidized and that that cannot be true, but look at how many companies are converting to 100% renewable – General Motors, Wal-Mart, Microsoft, Amazon, ...the list goes on. Ask yourself why do these companies, some of the most successful in the world, want to convert to renewable energy? The reason is because of the lower costs and the ability to fix the price of the electricity for up to 30 years. If Ohio does not strongly encourage the growth of renewable energy, it will not attract those companies that only want renewable power.

So how can HB 6 encourage this transition? **The bill should fix the onerous wind turbine setbacks that were changed in 2014.** These setbacks are some of the most restrictive in the country and have crippled the wind industry in Ohio. It should also include all solar farms greater than 2 MW (which is many community based and small solar projects) and include municipal utilities. Finally House Bill 6 eliminates the Energy Efficiency Resource Standards that have resulted in **over \$5.1 Billion in savings for Ohioans between 2009 and 2017 and the creation of over 81,000 jobs in the energy efficiency field.**

The Legislature should make the following changes so that the bill will be better for Ohio going into the future:

- 1) Remove the **provision that would single out wind energy for local referendums on projects even after Ohio Power Siting Board certification and after construction has begun.** No other kind of power plant, fracking well, pipeline or transmission line is subjected to this kind of "double jeopardy" standard. The fossil fuel interests will increase their funding of anti-wind groups to influence the township elections by spreading lies regarding health effects, flicker, noise and dangerous ice throw (all of which have been proven by multiple studies to be untrue). **Leaving this provision in HB 6 will halt further wind development in the state.**
- 2) **Return the wind turbine setbacks to the pre-2014 levels.** Those prior setbacks resulted in the Blue Creek and Timber Road Wind Farms which have generated \$5 million annually for schools, local governments and land lease payments to farmers. At the time the revised setbacks were put in place, there were 17 wind farms in various stages of development which would have brought \$4.2 billion in economic activity to the state

along with creating 13,000 jobs. **Since 2014, no new wind farms have been proposed.** Ohio has a tremendous wind resource and it is time we take advantage of it!

- 3) Keep the Energy Efficiency Resource Standards. Per **the Ohio Administrative Code, energy efficiency programs must be more beneficial than the cost.** This means that energy efficiency programs proposed by utilities are only approved if they are cost-effective. Under the Energy Efficiency Resource Standards, for every \$1 spent, Ohioans have received \$2.65 in savings.

These three changes to HB 6: **1)** Eliminating the provision for a township referendum for new wind farms; **2)** a return to the pre 2014 wind turbine setback from a property line; and **3)** retaining the Energy Efficiency Resource Standards; will put Ohio on a path of energy and job growth; create a means for a transition to a cleaner, more sustainable future; and greatly enhance the chances for the bill's passage in the Ohio House and Senate and acceptance by all Ohioans. Please do the right thing, the thing that is right for all of Ohio!

Thank you for your time and consideration of my suggestions today.