



17 S. High Street, #800 | Columbus, OH 43215
1-866-389-5653 | Fax: 614-224-9801 | TTY: 1-877-434-7598
aarp.org/oh | ohaarp@aarp.org | twitter: @AARPOhio
facebook.com/AARPOH

**Written Testimony on House Bill 6
Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
June 19, 2019
Jason C. Smith, AARP Ohio**

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Committee,

AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization with an age 50+ membership of nearly 37 million nationwide, and approximately 1.5 million members here in Ohio. AARP strongly opposes House Bill 6 as currently written. As the bill moves from the Ohio House of Representatives to the Ohio Senate, we urge our legislators to take several steps back from the issue and consider the harmful impact it will have on their constituents for decades to come.

For many Ohioans with low and fixed incomes, utility bills are a crucial pocketbook issue. Our older neighbors and relatives are too often forced to make hard choices about how to cover those bills while also affording food and medicine. Any legislation that raises utility bills needs to take into consideration the impact on these very vulnerable Ohioans. This is particularly disturbing given recent reports suggesting that First Energy Solutions is profitable without a state subsidy and language inserted late into the process that would benefit two coal-based electricity generating plants that has nothing to do with the issues brought forth by First Energy Solutions. As outrageous as it is to ask Ohioans to bailout a profitable company's shareholders, under no circumstances should Ohioans be asked to pay to send money to a coal plant in Indiana.

Making matters worse for residential utility customers, the additional provisions in this legislation also appear to offer a "blank check" to utility companies for future rate increases. One part of the bill would permit "decoupling" and allow utility companies to continue to charge customers the same amount of money on their monthly bills, even if they are using less electricity. Why should anyone have to keep paying the same amount of money for power when they are using less, and their bill should be going down? Proponents of this legislation argue that the proposal will actually lower customers' utility bills, but that is only true if you look at the short-term rate changes and ignore the "fine print" around decoupling and the new power purchase agreements authorized under the proposed bill. These are the issues causing us to oppose House Bill 6 and demand total transparency from the Legislature on precisely what the future costs of the legislation will be to Ohioans.

Ohioans have been promised lower utility bills and cleaner air as a result of this proposal. As the old saying goes, "if it's too good to be true, it probably is," and unfortunately we find that to be true when it comes to the promises of House Bill 6. AARP Ohio strongly urges you to read the fine print, consider the impact on older Ohioans and their pocketbooks, and oppose this unnecessary, harmful proposal. Thank you for your continued leadership as the bill moves forward.