

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee  
Chairman Steve Wilson  
Opponent Testimony on Substitute House Bill 6  
Testimony of Andrew Meiburg  
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Chairman Wilson and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, my name is Andrew Meiburg; I am a Project Development Intern with EDP Renewables and a student at The Ohio State University currently enrolled in Mechanical Engineering. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today as an opponent to Substitute House Bill 6.

Around this time four years ago was the first time I ever gave any real thought to renewable energy and its repercussions. I remember, because it was around the time I was considering taking a leave of absence from a fully-funded PhD program doing biomedical research at an R1 research institution. But after entering that program, I felt like I didn't have the patience for research. It was a decision I grappled with deeply. My mom had sacrificed so much to give me every opportunity she could, and I had worked extremely hard my whole childhood here in Central Ohio to reach that point debt-free. But I looked around and saw so many problems facing my generation; I wanted to contribute to solutions now, instead of writing papers that might eventually turn into solutions in decades. One night while scrolling through a research journal, I came across a paper about translucent solar panels that could be installed in windows, and it sent my imagination racing. The thought of buildings passively generating electricity, simply by existing was incredible to me. But who would get to claim ownership of that power? How would it affect utilities and the people working for them? And what about the infrastructure and jobs related to the way we currently operate? I read that paper, and I truly engaged with the scale of energy and power generation for the first time. I knew that I needed to work in renewable energy.

So, in 2015 I moved back to Gahanna, to live with my parents for a time and save money, before eventually moving down to the Ohio State campus area to go back to school, this time for a mechanical engineering degree. At the same time, I did everything I could on the side to learn about the renewable energy industry and to fight the intense guilt I felt in myself for not working to help others. The Ohio legislature had recently voted to freeze the state's Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards, which had been passed through a bipartisan effort in the statehouse. At the time, I could not have told you anything about what Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards meant, so I started interning with a non-partisan environmental advocacy group, to learn more about how local, state, and federal policies affect environmental policy and supplement my engineering education.

When the time came to start looking for summer internships, I set up an alert for "renewable energy" on Ohio State's job board and applied to every one of those jobs looking for an engineer. Lucky for me, through provisions in an agreement the company made with the state in building its Hog Creek Wind Farm, EDPR was required to hire a summer intern from The Ohio State University's College of Engineering. I got the job last summer and it sent my renewable energy education into overdrive.

I spent the summer working on several projects throughout the Midwest soaking up everything I could about the energy industry. I leveraged my engineering education at Ohio State to work as a liaison between our development and engineering teams, making sure the designs generated by our engineering team coincided with work being done by the development team. I used my experience reading and writing technical papers to support work being done by permitting teams. I drew on my work in coalition building in the advocacy space to work with landowners in our project areas. It was a truly a hand-in-glove fit where I got use the mish-mash of life experiences I have to work towards this one common goal of providing clean energy to this region that I've always called home.

I also got to know rural parts of the country in ways I had never been able to previously. I met a landowner with EDPR turbines on his land in Indiana who is also on his county's economic development committee. He told me about an idea they had to use the money generated from the project to improve their 4H center and hire additional teachers to offer advanced placement math and science courses to students throughout the county there. I ran a 5k through corn fields in rural Illinois. I learned more about the problems facing our rural communities from community members themselves, than I ever could have reading books or articles.

What I was not able to do during my time with EDPR last summer is spend much time in my home state of Ohio. Since the passage of Ohio's Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard, EDPR has constructed 138 total turbines in Northwest Ohio with a capacity of 266 Mega Watts, paying \$18.7M to private landowners, and \$6.4M in property taxes in the process. But the highly restrictive wind setback laws enacted in the state's 2014 budget bill have halted nearly all development of wind projects in the state. Instead, a significant portion of my summer last year was spent in Illinois, where a bill was recently introduced in the state legislature to procure 100% of the state's electricity from renewable sources by 2050.

After another internship working for an engineering firm in Columbus last fall, I am back at EDPR this summer. I have the unique opportunity to compare my current self with myself from one year ago, in the form of new interns. The growth I've seen in myself and the knowledge of the industry I've gained in that time is sometimes hard to believe. I will graduate from Ohio State in December, and I am again feeling the familiar pulls of opportunity and indecision. My family is here in Columbus and my partner's family is in Cleveland. Being close to friends and family is important to both of us. But to continue chasing that passion and drive sparked in me four year ago, I will most likely need to leave home again. I am forever grateful for the opportunity to break into the industry I was given in part because of the state's previous commitment to build new wind and solar projects throughout the state. I urge every senator to keep the Alternative Energy Standard in place so that Ohio can continue to experience additional in-state investment and give people of my generation more opportunities here at home to find jobs in an industry making a difference to halt climate change.

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

Thank you,

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