

Testimony of Kathleen Kinney Davis
Logan County, Ohio
In support of HB 6
June 19, 2019

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Ohio Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding support of HB 6.

Although a former employee of Ohio Environmental Council, a former intern at Ohio Farm Bureau, a former speaker for Central Ohio Sierra Club, and a landowner who has been offered wind leases, I am **NOT** a proponent of “wind farms,” henceforth more appropriately referred to as what they are, “industrial wind energy projects” constructed in rural residential communities. The reasons why are too numerous to include here. However, many of those reasons are about local authority, which is pertinent in HB 6.

Although it is purported that Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) provides those who may live within or near wind turbine projects a voice in whether a project will be constructed, PILOT does NOT give a voice—nor a vote—to those directly affected by wind turbine placement. And it does not prevent a project from going forward. Logan County is an example of this.

I am a resident and landowner in Logan County. In 2006, wind developer Eon approached my family proposing to pay for leasing our nearly 1,000 acres to develop wind turbines. We did our research. For numerous reasons, none in our family signed wind development leases. That project did not go forward, although many neighbors greatly benefited both from signing bonuses and from payments during the pre-development phase of the project. A few years later, another wind developer came along.

The majority of residents of Logan County desire to keep our county free of industrial wind projects. In 2014, the Richland Township Trustees passed a Resolution in opposition to the Scioto Ridge project owned by a British private equity firm located in the tax haven of the Channel Islands. One recital in the Resolution stated that “part of this wind farm is within one mile of a natural resource, specifically, Indian Lake, a resort and recreational area with a state campground and an abundance of wildlife, some protected and endangered such as the Bald Eagle.”

In Rushcreek Township, a Resolution in opposition to Scioto Ridge was also adopted by the Township Trustees and filed with the Ohio Power Siting Board. Included in this Resolution were the following recitals:

WHEREAS the US Geological Survey has determined that "the greatest concentrations of sinkholes within the Bellefontaine Outlier are present in McArthur and Rushcreek Townships of Logan County, where the density of sinkholes in some areas approaches 30 per square mile."; and

WHEREAS the environmental effects such as redirection of agricultural water drainage, and reduction of bird and bat populations will affect our agricultural, recreational, and tourism economy. With Ohio Department of Natural Resources currently studying white-nose syndrome in bat populations in our township, further reduction in bat population from a wind installation is not welcome. In addition, the enjoyment of the desirable natural ecology, aesthetics, and rural lifestyle of our township will be permanently degraded. ; and

WHEREAS the nature of our township is rural, it presents intangible values which are appreciated by those living, touring, and conducting business here. Such industrialization plunders our right of pursuit of happiness.

Resolutions were also adopted in Stokes Township, the Village of Russells Point and the Village of Belle Center. All five Resolutions were filed with the Ohio Power Siting Board.

In May 2016 the Logan County Commissioners (LCC) were told by Scioto Ridge executives that no turbines would be constructed in Logan County without a PILOT. In June 2016, the Logan County Commissioners unanimously denied a PILOT. In February 2019, Scioto Ridge executives informed the LCC that turbines would be constructed in the townships—the very townships in which the trustees had written resolutions against turbine installations. The Scioto Ridge project was not thwarted by the citizens' voices.

These Logan County communities weighed the costs and the benefits of industrial wind development. They determined that, in sum, the Scioto Ridge project would degrade the amenity of the area and limit development opportunities associated with Indian Lake's growth.

Scioto Ridge was nevertheless granted a certificate by the Ohio Power Siting Board. Did the Board have a different understanding of what was best for our community? Did they think our local cost-benefit determination was irrelevant? Did they lack the authority to consider the community's wishes? We and many other targeted communities are incensed at the inequity of Ohio's renewable energy policies that disenfranchise her people.

From our perspective, the developer had no incentive to accommodate our concerns or try to find some type of compromise that might be seen as a win-win. Instead, the relationship devolved into acrimony and caused much stress as well as division among neighbors. HB 6 can fix this through the right of referendum whereby affected township residents can cast a vote to approve or reject a project.

Citizens' voices have little power. Citizens' votes do.

I urge you to vote yes for HB 6. Allow Ohioans power over their lives, and don't allow foreign or national wind developers to dictate our future.