



**Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
Chairman Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, and Ranking Member Williams
Opponent Testimony on Substitute House Bill 6
Testimony of Rachael Belz
Ohio Consumers Power Alliance**

June 27, 2019

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, my name is Rachael Belz, and I am the Project Director for the Ohio Consumers Power Alliance. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today as an opponent to Substitute House Bill 6.

As we mentioned to you in our testimony prior to the introduction of the substitute bill, the mission of the Ohio Consumers Power Alliance is to educate Ohio's energy consumers around opportunities to diversify Ohio's energy portfolio and policy actions that could impact consumer choice and spending. While we appreciate the work done by the Chairman and members of the Senate on the substitute bill, at the end of the day, House Bill 6 still takes Ohio's energy future in the wrong direction and flies in the face of what consumers in this state want from their energy spending.

The legislation still charges every ratepayer in the state of Ohio to bailout two FirstEnergy Solutions nuclear plants and the two OVEC coal plants, one of which is located in Indiana. This provision shifts the burden of failed corporate investments onto Ohioans rather than steering utilities toward less risky and less expensive clean energy options. During previous testimony, we heard directly from a witness from FirstEnergy Solutions that these dollars would not be spent to update the technology used at the nuclear power plants, nor would they be spent to bring nuclear power into the 21st century. Ohio ratepayer dollars would be used to literally keep the lights on at the power plant. We believe Ohioans deserve more.

This bill also reduces the benchmarks of Ohio's current renewable energy program. Today, utilities are required to reach a target of 12.5% of energy generated from renewable energy sources by 2027, and that percentage would continue each year thereafter. Under the substitute version of the bill, that percentage is cut to 8.5% by 2025, at which point, the targets disappear completely. As you have heard from so many businesses during this process, a lack of certainty leads to a lack of interest on behalf of those who may have otherwise chosen to invest in Ohio.

I am standing here today representing the Ohio consumer, a voice that is often mentioned but rarely heard in Ohio's energy debate. We know our fight against FirstEnergy's multiple attempts to saddle Ohio ratepayers with higher electric bills is a bit of a David and Goliath-scale battle. But we hope you will hear our opposition to this bill.

Our members remain staunchly opposed to rewarding FirstEnergy Solutions' bad business decisions by allowing them to dig deep into the pockets of Ohio ratepayers to cover the bill. We appreciate the additional audit provisions included in this version, and we would love to take a look at those books when they become available, but that in no way makes this a palatable bill for our members.

Further, this is a huge change to energy policy for the state of Ohio. There is a rush to pass this legislation before a deadline date that was set by the corporation who stands to benefit the most from these changes. This deadline is just a few days away, and the legislation includes significant changes to energy efficiency, renewable energy and PUCO involvement. There is so much potential for a strong, comprehensive statewide policy that truly embraces energy innovation, saves consumers money, and reduces harmful emissions. Pushing this bill through when so many questions still remain and so many opportunities are ignored sells this state short and tells our members that Ohio really is not ready to embrace a clean energy future. Rather our leaders are just ready to support a corporate bailout.

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