

My name is William David Hardie. I am speaking in favor of Senate Bill 346. I am a pediatric pulmonologist who has worked 30 years in Cincinnati. My reason for being here today is to provide a first-hand testimony on the impacts of air pollution on human health. In my practice I see children with a variety of respiratory ailments. These illnesses range from common disorders such as asthma to less common, but equally if not more severe, respiratory ailments such as cystic fibrosis, chronic lung disease of children born prematurely and children who are dependent on ventilators from a host of other conditions. I can say with absolute conviction that the air quality directly impacts the health of all these children. I have seen children worsen in days when our air quality is poor. The parents of my patients consistently report their children struggle when the air quality index worsens. A significant source of this air pollution is from fine particulates and ozone produced by fossil fuel consumption from coal-burning power plants.

What I am telling you is nothing novel and has been reported again and again in hosts of epidemiological studies. In fact, two years ago researchers from The University of Cincinnati, and Cincinnati Children's Hospital, demonstrated an association between increased exposure to air pollution during the conception period for pregnant women living in Ohio and increased birth defects. The impact of air pollution on lung health extends to beyond vulnerable children and impacts everyone. Just two weeks ago, researchers from Germany, London and Harvard published findings which estimated air pollution increased mortality from Covid-19 by 17% in North America. These findings illustrate that future threats to our respiratory health will invariably continue and may accelerate. Which is exactly why we absolutely must make changes for that which we can control including exploring more clear, renewable energy sources for Ohio.

I understand the need to consider and balance the costs of cleaner air with the benefits. Many argue that the economic cost of renewable energy is cost prohibitive. However, the cost-benefit of clean air initiatives has already been studied by the federal environmental protection agency and shown that for every dollar invested in improving air quality society will save over 30 dollars in medical care costs. Benjamin Franklin's axiom of an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is as true today as it was 250 years ago.

I was born and raised in southwestern Ohio and extremely proud of the great accomplishments over the past 200 years from so many of other Ohio natives. While the circumstances leading to the passage of House Bill 6 are a blemish on our state's reputation, I feel you are now given a unique and enviable opportunity to flip an unfortunate event into passing legislation which will improve the health of Ohioans statewide. Policies which will improve the air quality are undoubtably wise and essential investments for everyone's physical and economic health. As a pediatric pulmonologist and advocate for children's health, I call on Ohio's legislators to protect Ohioans' right to clean air by supporting Senate Bill 346.