

Ladies and gentlemen of the committee -- my name is Travis Irvine and I am the former Libertarian candidate for Governor of Ohio. On behalf of myself, the Libertarian Party of Ohio and nearly 80,000 Ohioans who voted for me in 2018, I'm proud to stand with this multi-partisan alliance in favor of SB 346, which would be a full repeal of HB 6 and a rebuke of corruption in Ohio's statehouse.

It's in this spirit of multi-partisanship that I'd like to submit as my written testimony an amended version of an op-ed I co-authored for the Ohio Capital Journal with Tyler Fehrman, who serves as the Policy Director for Clean Fuels Ohio, as well as Racheal Belz, who serves as Executive Director of Ohio Citizen Action. I strongly urge this committee and all Ohio state legislators to take this chance and make sure HB 6 is *not* a stain on your political records, the 133rd Ohio Assembly or this entire institution.

---

When the controversial nuclear bailout bill known as HB 6 first reached the Ohio House floor in 2019, only a handful of Ohioans truly knew what it was and what was in it. This "handful of Ohioans" -- as we would later find out -- was a group of lawmakers and lobbyists who had cooked up a historic pay-to-play bribery scheme, funded by various energy companies and predominantly led by FirstEnergy.

The plan was relatively simple: the companies intended to spend \$60 million on lobbyists and statehouse races to ultimately secure a \$1.5 billion bailout from the Ohio state legislature. Of course, that \$1.5 billion was to be paid for by consumers through increasing energy rates on Ohio households, while also cutting energy-saving programs that could have saved them \$4 billion. While the bill was falsely sold as an "Ohio Clean Air Program," its coal and nuclear plant bailouts actually made Ohio the first state to move *backwards* from its renewable energy goals. So overall, HB 6 was a terrible bill to begin with and comes off even worse now. HB 6 barely passed the Ohio legislature to make its way to Governor Mike DeWine's desk and all subsequent attempts to repeal or negate it via the ballot were beaten back with questionable and xenophobic tactics.

While it certainly caught the attention of Columbus' savvy statehouse reporters -- plus the influx of dark money spent on pro-HB 6 ads [earned the national spotlight](#) -- Ohio voters wouldn't know the full extent of the corruption behind HB 6 until the Federal Bureau of Investigation announced they were tracking the energy companies' money and trailing the perpetrators the entire time. The five primary suspects were charged at the end of July, including now-former speaker of the House Larry Householder, former Ohio Republican Party chairman Matt Borges and three other political operatives. It seemed like justice had been served and the bad guys were busted.

However, not everything has been magically fixed since the historic HB 6 scandal was exposed -- more specifically, HB 6 *still exists* on the books exactly as it was passed. This is because most of the money stemming from Householder, Borges and their HB 6 cohorts still touches *a majority* of legislators in the Ohio statehouse. This is obviously why the bill passed in the first place, but now it's taken them even longer to repeal HB 6 than it took for them to approve it. Why could that be?

For starters, [as cleveland.com has reported](#), the Republicans who currently dominate the Ohio state legislature are "all over the place" -- some want to take action, but aren't exactly sure what to do, while other Republicans don't want to act at all. According to Rep. David Leland (D-Columbus,) "you've got people who want to do something, but they're not sure what they want to do. And then you've got a speaker who doesn't know what he wants to do. It's a multi-faceted problem for the Republican caucus."

Now Ohioans are getting restless. But thankfully -- as we see today -- some legislators in the statehouse on *both* sides of the aisle are trying to right this wrong. I want to thank Republicans in the House like

Majority Whip Rep. Laura Lanese (R-Grove City) for bucking Householder's calls to support HB 6 and voting against the bill in 2019. I want to thank Democrats like Rep. Leland, as well as Rep. Michael Skindell (D-Lakewood) and Rep. Michael O'Brien (D-Warren) who have also introduced a bill to repeal HB 6. I want to thank legislators such as Rep. Dave Greenspan (R-Westlake) who have signed on to both of these bills. However, so far still *no* proposal has made it past the initial committee hearings and now it's clear that if the majority of Ohioans want to see HB 6 repealed, they must make their voices heard. That's why I -- like so many Ohioans -- am grateful that this hearing is finally being held.

After all, across the political spectrum, Ohioans *are* ready to see HB 6 get repealed. Thanks to the work of the FBI and individuals committed to transparency, voters are now fully aware of FirstEnergy and Larry Householder's conspiracy to siphon \$1.5 billion in Ohio taxpayer money to failing energy companies in *and* outside of the state. Ohioans deserve to have corrective action taken by their elected leaders as soon as possible, as an immediate repeal of HB 6 *on its face* is a no-brainer. For now, it's just time for both Republicans and Democrats in the statehouse to have the guts and political will to do it.

Thank you again for this opportunity -- I look forward to helping this multi-partisan alliance repeal HB 6 and take a stand against corruption in Ohio's statehouse in the weeks, months and years ahead.

Travis Irvine  
Bexley, Ohio