

Opponent Testimony of
Ottawa County Department of Jobs and Family Services Executive Director
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Before the Energy and Public Utilities Committee of The Ohio Senate
November 30, 2020

Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Ohio Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, thank you for accepting my written testimony opposing Senate Bill 346 (SB 346) to Repeal House Bill 6 of the 133rd Ohio General Assembly. My name is Stephanie Kowal and I'm the Director of the Ottawa County Department of Job and Family Services. I'm here to urge members of this committee to oppose SB 346, thereby retaining HB 6, as enacted. In May of 2019, I provided testimony to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee of the Ohio House of Representatives, as to the importance of this legislation. Since that time, question has been cast on the process of vetting that Bill, but the importance of the content and impact of HB 6 have not changed. Business challenges and hardships from the COVID-19 pandemic continue to ravage our local, state, national and world economies. However, House Bill 6, as enacted, continues to play a major role in protecting Ohio jobs, families and our economy.

The Ottawa County Department of Job and Family Services helps connect Ottawa County residents with jobs and provide valuable resources for families, children, and senior citizens. We work together to assess, understand, and address the needs of our community. Helping Ottawa County residents access employment opportunities is one of our most critical functions, and that is one of the primary reasons I am speaking out to oppose SB 346 and to retain HB 6 as enacted.

HB 6 succeeded in keeping our state's only two nuclear facilities online. This ensured the retention of roughly 700 high-skilled, well-paying jobs that support families across northern Ohio. Together with the Cleveland-area Perry nuclear plant, these two facilities are responsible for more than 4,000 jobs, either directly or indirectly. To businesses already distressed as a result of shut-downs and lost revenue from the COVID-19 pandemic, loss of these facilities would be disastrous. The two nuclear plants together spend over \$45 million to vendors throughout Ohio, and a loss of that kind of revenue

and business on top of everything else experienced during the pandemic would only result in more closures and job losses.

To job seekers and families, the loss of employment and employment prospects would be devastating. Without these jobs, families would migrate to follow employment opportunities: current employees, spouses, young adults, high school students would leave the area. This would drain the labor shed and labor pipeline of current and future high skilled workers, in a time when businesses are already starving to fill technical positions. Additionally, individuals displaced due to the COVID-19 pandemic have already received the maximum available in state unemployment, emergency unemployment, and federal unemployment benefits. Those working in secondary industries, in particular, would likely face extended periods of unemployment, have limited opportunity for re-employment, and no financial support during periods of retraining or transition.

Imagine, having survived on reduced work and unemployment benefits to get through a pandemic, only to find that the likelihood of returning to full employment is further compromised due to legislative complications. There is no financial help because all benefits have been exhausted, and employment options are severely limited. The impact of this scenario on the wellbeing of local communities and Ohio families cannot be overstated.

Retaining HB 6 would help protect and preserve thousands of Ohio jobs—thereby also supporting thousands of Ohio families, many of which include households with children and seniors, some of our state’s most vulnerable residents. In addition to employing Ohioans, these two plants support local governments, schools and emergency services through their combined state and local taxes. Investments in vendors across the state, combined with local and state taxes paid, recirculate throughout Ohio communities and strengthens local economies. All told, these two plants contribute more than half a billion dollars to our state’s GDP annually. These are numbers we can’t afford to ignore.

Please retain HB 6 and help protect Ohio jobs and families. Thank you.