

**Opponent Testimony of  
Ottawa County Emergency Management Agency Director Fred Petersen**

**Before the Energy and Public Utilities Committee of  
The Ohio Senate**

**December 1, 2020**

Chairman Wilson, Vice-Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit written testimony to you today as an opponent of Senate Bill 346 to repeal HB6 of the 133<sup>rd</sup> Ohio General Assembly. My name is Fred Petersen, I am the Emergency Management Agency Director for Ottawa County. I would like to take this opportunity to impress upon you the importance of the continued operation of the state's two nuclear power plants.

There's no doubt that Ohio's nuclear power plants are a significant source of reliable, secure and clean electricity for the state. The Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station in Ottawa County and the Perry Nuclear Power Plant in Lake County generate electricity regardless of weather conditions or the availability of natural gas or coal. These plants also benefit Ohio's air quality as nuclear power produces no carbon emissions.

Ohio's nuclear power plants contribute to a diverse energy portfolio in Ohio, reducing the state's dependence upon any one fuel source. Without these plants the electricity grid in our region will be significantly more dependent upon natural gas. This increased reliance upon natural gas will make Ohio more vulnerable to disruptions in the availability of natural gas. This is the proverbial 'putting all our eggs in one basket'! In my field of work, I never consider it to be a good practice to rely upon one resource. Redundancy is critical.

I would like to remind you of a couple of instances that illustrate our vulnerability if we rely too heavily upon natural gas. During the polar vortex in 2014, I experienced first-hand just how vulnerable the regional grid was to this demand for natural gas. Just as we entered one of the coldest periods of the polar vortex, I was informed that PJM may have to implement rolling

brown-outs in our area due to grid instability. This was due to the high residential demand for natural gas, which significantly reduced the availability of natural gas for electricity generation. Fortunately, we were able to avoid the rolling brown-outs, largely due to the contribution the nuclear power plants provided to the grid. You can imagine the problems these interruptions to the grid could have caused for our residents. .

Another recent example occurred two years ago, in that state up north. They experienced gas shortages that nearly led to gas not being available to be delivered to homes and critical facilities. This was due to the extreme cold coupled with a fire at a gas compressor station. Customers were asked to curtail the usage of gas and electricity to help the utility pull through the event.

While we are blessed in Ohio with an abundant supply of natural gas, we cannot allow our increased reliance on it to endanger our citizens. Even as our supply of natural gas has increased tremendously, so has our use of it, especially for power production. Polar vortexes, supply line failures, compressor station failures, and any number of other possibilities could put our citizens at risk.

Ohio's nuclear power plants, In addition to their contribution to a stable and reliable grid, deliver other significant contributions to keeping our communities safe. Davis-Besse and Perry help maintain public safety and preparedness by providing critical funding that supports emergency response agencies in the counties surrounding the plants and at the state level. These funds pay salaries for our emergency management personnel, assist us in the training of our emergency response personnel, and allow us to purchase and maintain emergency response equipment and facilities. While all of these things are used specifically to prepare us for the highly unlikely possibility of a radiological emergency, they also help us to ensure emergency responders are ready to address a wide variety of events, even those that are totally unrelated to plant operation. The communities around these plants benefit from a well-

rounded, and well prepared emergency services force that is always ready to support public health and safety, and Ohio's nuclear plants play a large role in making that possible.

In summary, I challenge you to find a better, or more proven, partner of Emergency Management in the State of Ohio, than the nuclear power industry. As previously mentioned, they lend significant support to local and state response agencies. More importantly, due to the stringent preparedness requirements they have to meet, the communities in which they operate are safer.

As of today, the long-term viability of these plants is at risk and therefore so is Ohio's balanced energy portfolio. Our state is rapidly moving toward a very narrow energy portfolio, one that I believe puts our citizens' safety at risk.

Your job here is a difficult one complicated by the circumstances that surrounded the original passage of HB6. However, HB6 does contain good energy policy for the State of Ohio. Specifically, that policy recognizes the incredible importance of nuclear power. I call on you to find a way to ensure the continued operation of Ohio's nuclear power plants.

Respectfully,

Fred Petersen, Director

Ottawa County Emergency Management Agency