

Testimony on Am. HB 434
Sub. Energy and Public Utilities Committee
Submitted by:
Deborah Cooper

Chair McColley, Vice Chair Schuring, and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing me to present this written testimony in opposition to HB 434.

I am a native of Ohio, a longtime Ohio resident, and a regular voter. I have vivid recollections of the early cancer death some years ago of one of my colleagues, who grew up in Piketon, Ohio, under the shadow of the now out-of-service nuclear facility. Little has been done since to address radiation concerns in that part of the state: <https://www.cleveland.com/opinion/2020/10/why-do-so-many-shrug-off-tiny-piketons-radiation-concerns-how-do-you-spell-rural-poverty.html>

And an April 28 article in *The Washington Post* (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2002/04/28/heard-about-the-near-accident-at-the-ohio-nuclear-plant-im-not-surprised/9d015883-8bc8-44a8-bc2b-d1ff0aea0915/>) discusses the more recent near-disaster at the Davis-Besse nuclear power plant near Toledo.

Now Ohio lawmakers want to create a nuclear authority to make decisions on behalf of Ohioans, potentially affecting their health and safety, and doing so without any transparency.

HB 434 says its proposed activities are an “essential governmental function” and that it addresses matters of public necessity. It repeals the Ohio Department of Health’s authorization to regulate and oversee entities dealing with radioactivity. Eight of the bill’s 14 pages are taken up creating a convoluted process for getting board members onto the Nuclear Development Authority.

As if this were not enough to ensure that the public will be shut out of involvement and oversight of activities, an amendment to this bill would move the Authority under the auspices of the Ohio Department of Development. While the Development Department signs contracts, the rest of the activities of the new Nuclear Development Authority would be within JobsOhio, where the public will have no access to its activities, and the Authority would NOT be subject to Ohio Open Records laws.

Where will the next nuclear facility be built? Will residents have a say? Which vulnerable, low-income community will next be saddled with the risks and bear the cost of accidents? Who will hold accountable entities (such as First Energy, a company that has already cost Ohio taxpayers millions of dollars) accountable? The Authority? We’ve already seen how our own state leaders and legislators bilked taxpayers through HB 6, which has yet to be completely repealed, even long after the First Energy graft was exposed.

And yet, Ohioans are expected to just TRUST that the Authority, working under cover of JobsOhio, will have the best interests of Ohio citizens at heart?

This Ohioan, who has seen how difficult it is to hold Ohio officials accountable for serious crimes against our citizenry, does NOT and CANNOT trust an undercover Authority to act in ways that protect our health and safety.

Please do NOT allow HB 434 to pass.