

Letter to the Ohio Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee concerning HB 434

3 Dec 2022

David H. Brown
Beavercreek, Oh.

Dear Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Martin, and members of the committee,

I am a life-long resident of Ohio. I live just east of Dayton in the city of Beavercreek. I am very concerned about what will result if HB 434 is passed. HB 434 would create a secretive new Ohio Nuclear Development Authority that would dig into the Ohio treasury for unspecified amounts of money for an unspecified amount of time to support research and development of what is termed an “advanced” nuclear reactor. Three main concerns I have with HB 434 are: safety risks, misuse of my tax dollars and lack of any accountability.

A deep concern I have is about the possibility of a nuclear disaster occurring if one of these new nuclear power plants was built under HB434. One small group from eGeneration and Elysium Industries is behind HB 434 and previously HB 104. *(Both bills were copied directly from eGeneration’s website!)* Molten Salt Reactors are the only type that eGeneration is promoting. Proponents of the new reactors called for in HB 434 may call them safe, however, no molten salt reactors have been built in 50 years and the use of molten salt for cooling or fuel destroy their internals rapidly, then leak. I remember the Three-Mile Island nuclear power plant reactor meltdown and the fear and alarm I and everyone else felt when it happened. Equipment and instrument malfunctions along with human judgement errors and human procedural errors combined to cause the accident. An even worse nuclear accident occurred at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in 1986 due to human error. Then in 2011 there was the Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster caused by an earthquake and tsunami, made worse by collusion between regulator, industry and government officials. There is also the ever-present risk of sabotage. These factors, whether human and equipment failings, collusion coverup, natural disasters or sabotage, could very well occur during the operation of any new nuclear power station initiated by HB 434. A problematic example currently operating in Ohio is the Davis-Bessie reactor. Since nuclear power is so dangerous, taxpayer money (for an unspecified amount of money and time), should not be used to fund research and development of a so-called “advanced” nuclear reactor.

A second concern I have about HB 434 is the amount of taxpayer money Ohioans will be paying since HB 434 specifies neither length of time nor how deep it will dive into the Ohio treasury. Bill promoters have given no hint — and the public would not be able to find out — who is being paid or what is being developed. As a state authority, unlike traditional state agencies, it could conduct business outside

of typical accountability requirements for employment practices, contracts, procurement, and financial reporting. It could also issue bonds or dip into public treasuries. Wall Street won't invest in nuclear power. New nuclear power will have to be almost completely taxpayer or ratepayer subsidized and nuclear research can cost billions. Nuclear power is far more expensive than renewable energy, and takes a minimum of 10 years to license and build. Besides, the federal government is already spending billions on nuclear research and development. How can Ohio, with no experience, do a better (or even good) job of oversight and running research reactors? eGeneration had a heavy hand in writing HB 434 and is its major beneficiary! This bill just sounds like a massive tax-payer give-away to a small special interest group as was done previously under HB 6 in 2019.

The third concern I have with HB 434 is the lack of any accountability and public oversight. One of the most serious problems with HB 434 is that the Authority would be put under the auspices of the Ohio Department of Development, which writes contracts for JobsOhio. JobsOhio is beyond the reach of the Ohio Open Records Act, Ohio ethics laws, the Sunshine Act, the Ohio Administrative Procedure Act, and other accountability requirements. Why is authority being put under the auspices of the Ohio Department of Development instead the Department of Administrative Services if there is nothing to hide? Also, unlike traditional state agencies, many state authorities conduct business outside of the typical oversight and accountability requirements. The Board overseeing the R & D would have no members of the public on it. . Also, the public could not sue for damages because HB 434 is worded to remove the State of Ohio from any responsibility for accidents and radioactive contamination. Residents living near any Authority facility handling radioactive materials would have no recourse if an accident or spill harmed or contaminated them or their property. The same would be true for workers. However, Ohio taxpayers would be required to pay for radioactive cleanup from the nuclear reactors after spills and accidents. The trouble is, radioactive contamination is impossible to actually cleanup so Ohioans would be forever adversely affected.

HB 434 could result in the production of nuclear reactors that are unsafe and threaten the health and lives of Ohioans. The R & D into an advanced nuclear reactor initiated by HB 434 would be an unlimited tax give-away to a small special interest group when the Federal government is already doing nuclear R & D. With HB 434, there would be no public oversight, but Ohioans would be responsible for paying for any radioactive cleanup from a reactor set up by HB 434. There is a safer and cheaper alternative to dangerous nuclear reactors, and that is renewable sources of energy. HB 434 is a terrible bill for Ohio, vote NO on HB 434.

