

TESTIMONY – December 6, 2022

In opposition to:

Ohio House Bill 434: “Advanced Nuclear Technology Helping Energize Mankind” Act

Submitted by:

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To: State of Ohio, Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee

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

I am concerned that HB 424’s goals may be based on a misunderstanding. For decades, I have researched, coordinated or advised on diverse sustainability and energy strategies, usually collaborative. And there were many red flags that popped up when reading through the bill.

Everyone involved in HB 424 seems to have the best of intentions to provide clean energy – and to position Ohio as a global leader, and not be left behind. But those intentions may be misplaced.

There are unanswered questions about longstanding hurdles to overcome – that will be better addressed by simple up-front investigative legwork – versus jumping straight to an enormous time and funding investment in R&D, only to find what is likely a dead end.

Mainly, we seem to be in the realm of similar technologies, such as algae fuel and cellulosic ethanol – other lost causes, that are repeatedly reintroduced over time as “not getting a fair hearing.”

HB 434 might be considered “baseless hope” until the following questions are answered – and answered more easily than trying to drum up federal funds for unsupported technologies - and wasting taxpayer money better spent on winning strategies NOW, such as renewables, and especially energy efficiency (which has saved Ohio billions in the past):

1) Why have thorium/molten salt reactors (eGeneration’s focus) not gained traction over the decades the concept has been around, if it has been an ultimate clean energy answer? Could it be because molten salts have decayed internal parts when previously attempted in reactors, as salt usually does?

2) Why has eGeneration not attracted private investors, if there is much profit to be made, vs tens of millions in cost to recoup – including decommissioning that can take up to 60 years? Since taxpayer money will be used, how much of this cost are they subsidizing? How will voters react to that?

3) Why is proponent testimony almost solely from eGeneration members? (Are they “pre-selected” Authority/Board members?) Why are the many factions proponents claim will benefit not flocking to support this initiative or writing in: Supply chain industry leaders, the medical community and hospitals, Chambers of Commerce, environmental organizations, climate advocates?

4) Is there actually a market for medical use for the nuclear waste? Yes, radiation can help cure cancer, but must it only come from nuclear reactors developed by eGeneration? What is the medical community using right now? I thought hospitals preferred to use their own cyclotrons, linear accelerators, and PET, since it is less expensive and safer than nuclear waste?

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Besides those questions, above, about the basic validity of what HB 434 is pursuing, there are major concerns about how the committee and work would be implemented.

The minimalist language in the bill, and loose, generalized concepts, belie the gravity of what is being proposed. It leads one to wonder whether those involved truly understand the innate, historically proven pitfalls and dangers. For example:

1) **Why would the designated authority be an “Ohio Nuclear DEVELOPMENT Authority.”** The federal nuclear “authority” is called the “Nuclear Regulatory Commission” (for good reason). And why would that Ohio “Authority” consist of only nine members to oversee work performed under the bill, **appointed solely by the governor**. Is he a nuclear and health expert? How were our governor’s qualifications determined?

2) Why would these **nine members ONLY represent three stakeholder groups within the nuclear engineering and manufacturing INDUSTRY** – not a wide range of affected stakeholders: citizen groups, environmental groups, the health industry, knowledgeable nuclear impact activists and scientists?

3) Why would the **stated qualifications** of the nine members from within the nuclear industry **not require intensive education and experience?** For example:

a) **Safety group qualifications: “At least a bachelor’s degree in nuclear...” or other engineering field - and “one of the following,”** including a “professional” (undefined) in “nuclear reactor safety.”

b) **Industry group qualifications: “...at least five years of experience in one or more of the following, which includes merely “handling and storing nuclear waste.”**

c) **Engineering group qualifications: “...at least a bachelor’s degree”** (as in ‘a,’ above), and “be a **recognized professional** in at least one of the following,” which includes merely “**control systems.**”

4) Why would the **nominating council** for such a weighty nuclear authority be so **selected from political figures vs a team of professional and diverse stakeholders?** For example:

a) The president of the senate, or “**the president’s designee**” – whomever they select.

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b) The speaker of the house of representatives, “**or the speaker's designee.**”

c) Five members of **Ohio State University’s** nuclear engineering external advisory board, also selected by our governor. Why was this particular advisory board **hand-picked in advance**, with the school’s exact name inserted into proposed Ohio legislative language?

One final question: Who were all the parties involved in writing the language of this bill?

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The bill also intends to leave open the door for this type of loose, worrisome legislation **to be replicated for other industries:** “It is the intent of the general assembly in enacting this chapter of the Revised Code to encourage its use as a model for future legislation to further the pursuit of innovative research and development for any industry in this state.”

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Please answer the questions, above, and use the answers to reconsider sponsoring and passing Ohio House Bill 434. **Ohioans are depending on you to do the right thing. And they will remember for some time to come, as with House Bill 6.**

HB 434 appears to partially be an attempt to fill in the gap from the 2021 lost subsidies for nuclear energy, as a result of the HB 6 corruption fiasco. It also seems to be a way to prop up what too many political leaders are convinced is key to a sustainable energy future. It definitely is not.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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SUMMARY for Witness Info Form:

House Bill 434 may be based on a misunderstanding. There are unanswered questions about longstanding hurdles to overcome – that will be better addressed by simple up-front investigative legwork – versus jumping straight to investment in R&D, only to find a dead end. E.g., Why have thorium/molten salt reactors (eGeneration’s focus) not gained traction over the decades the concept has been around? Why has eGeneration not attracted private investors? Why is proponent testimony nearly solely from eGeneration members? It is doubtful there is a market for medical use for the nuclear waste. Also, the process for the formation of the Authority is questionable. The bill leaves the door open for replication of an ineffective and worrisome process in other industries.