

November 29, 2022

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
The Ohio Senate
Columbus, Ohio

Dear Senators:

I am asking that you vote against HB 434, a bill that would create an Ohio authority to pursue research on nuclear energy technology. There are numerous reasons that the bill should be opposed. I am most concerned about the nature of the proposed authority, the need for more nuclear technology, and the safety issues posed by expanded use of nuclear technology.

The proposed authority would be housed in the Ohio Department of Development. The Department of Development writes contracts for JobsOhio. If administration of the nuclear authority is given to JobsOhio, there will be extraordinary limits on public oversight of the authority. JobsOhio is shielded from the Ohio Open Records Act, Ohio ethics laws, the Sunshine Act, and the Ohio Administrative Procedure Act. This would make public oversight of the nuclear authority practically impossible and potentially create very dangerous environmental and health risks for Ohio citizens. Are you ready to create a nuclear authority that lacks any effective public oversight?

The rationale for the nuclear authority is that it would help produce “advanced” nuclear technologies needed to produce more carbon-free energy. The problem is that the “advanced” technologies under consideration in the proposal are not new or advanced. The proposed authority would concentrate on molten salt reactors that use molten salt to cool reactor cores. Such reactors were first attempted in the 1960s and none have been built for over 50 years. These reactors rapidly corrode their internal parts and then leak, creating a constant need for replacement parts if serious leaks are to be avoided. This problem makes the reactors expensive to operate and potentially very dangerous. The electricity produced by these plants would be much more expensive than that already available from wind turbines and solar panels, which generate no dangerous pollution.

Nuclear power always involves contamination, cleanup, and decommissioning of old plants. There is nothing in HB 434 that discusses covering the costs of spills or accidents causing radioactive contamination, property damage, and harm to public health. We are left to conclude that the State of Ohio would be forced to assume the costs of accidents and subsequent cleanup. Furthermore, the aforementioned lack of oversight would prevent careful siting of plants to minimize the threats to the environment and public health.

Ohio already has renewable energy technologies that can meet our energy needs without using nuclear power. However, Ohio has hamstrung the development of renewable energy through the establishment of unreasonable setback rules for wind and by allowing local governing bodies to be overly restrictive in permitting solar projects. Instead of supporting renewables, the Ohio legislature is taking the unprecedented step of creating a largely unregulated nuclear authority to produce potentially harmful technologies that we do not need. Please do the right thing and vote against HB 434.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Melampy".

Michael Melampy

143 Westbridge, Berea, OH 44017