

To Whom it May Concern on House Agricultural Committee,

My name is Melissa Sheets, and I'm a resident of Fairborn, in the Twin Towers neighborhood. I am writing to express my support for House Bill 193. My family and I have been continually bothered by the overwhelming odor, environmental problems and increase in traffic outside our residential neighborhood and on local area roads. I am just one voice in a group of Ohio citizens numbering over 5,000 seeking to improve our quality of life.

I believe HB 193 will help citizens across Ohio by ensuring communities have a direct say in the development of their communities. Too many times decisions seemingly are made without local input or even knowledge of what is being proposed for our communities.

This bill ensures townships and counties can regulate where biosolid lagoons and biodigestion facilities come to be located through zoning resolutions. Most of the companies that operate biosolid lagoons and biodigestion facilities in Ohio tend to sneak into the communities under seemingly secret conditions and have absolutely zero requirement to inform anyone in the community. Communities and considered citizens only find out about these facilities when something goes wrong, and citizens start to ask questions. At that point it is much too late to make any meaningful difference to preserve the community.

OEPA has stated that they don't have the authority to consider: Local zoning, Out-of-state waste, increase in road usage, property values, Noise and Popularity of the site when approving a biodigestion site and/or bio solid lagoon. Passing HB 193 will allow townships and counties to zone their own communities where it can easily be decided what the impact on communities will truly be.

There are numerous unintended consequences from these developments that the citizens are left to face with no real recourse from the companies. Some issues are:

- Township roads are not meant for industrial truck traffic and cause early degradation of roads, putting citizens at risk. This means that when school buses and semi-truck traffic meet, they both must drop their outside wheels off the pavement. As a community we have been extremely lucky no school children have been harmed, and a 2020 Greene County Engineer's report confirmed traffic and safety issues.
- From early research into Renenergy biodigester it was uncovered that there was a no Emergency Management Plans developed or filed with local fire departments and EMS. This appeared to be a common occurrence with the biodigester companies. This lack of action puts local fire/EMS personnel in jeopardy when responding to an event in an unknown and seemingly dangerous location.
- Fires have occurred at multiple locations due to chemicals produced or hauled in which causes a great risk to the neighbors. As these facilities are built within local residential communities. One facility had a fire that took 4 township fire departments over 8 hours to ensure the facility would not explode due to the methane produced.
- Spills at facilities, what that means to the local communities, and what the potential health and safety issues for the surrounding communities. One facility has had 3 spills. A spill that occurred on December 24, 2022, has still not been cleaned up and the resident had to contact USEPA to ensure action was taken. The lack of remorse from the companies is truly disheartening and concerning at the lack of effort to correct problems they've caused.

- Noxious odors produced by these facilities are extreme and have severely negative impacts on the surrounding residents and local communities. Citizens are not able to enjoy their own property. The noxious odors permeate their homes even with their windows and doors closed. We have had to move outdoor events, indoors to escape the odor. We have been left to explain to our young children why they're unable to enjoy their outdoor toys, play equipment and pool. It has made us question all future growth, improvement and investments to our home. The smell is so overwhelming and unnatural there are negative impacts almost immediately to health. While pregnant, driving in areas closer to the biodigester would trigger such extreme nausea and morning sickness I'd need to pull over to vomit. It's also been reporting that children at bus stops outside have had the same reaction. Our local group started using "Smell My City," a free app to track odor complaints. It uses GIS to pinpoint your exact location, populates GMT time, uses a 1-5 rating system, allows you to comment on "smell description," "symptoms" and "additional comments." From September 2019 - May 23, 2023, local citizens reported over 7,500 nuisance odors originating from the local facility, with over 850 reports since January 2023. We have shared this information with OEPA on numerous occasions, yet the citizens are still dealing with this issue 3 years later.
- The on going noxious odors have negative economic impacts on the local communities. Residents around one facility have challenged their property values due to the horrible smell and won a decrease in their property taxes. Additionally as a military community in Fairborn, the Wright Patterson military community are warning their incoming members to avoid the community with the "odor issue." Most of these companies claim a tax exemption or reduction that lowers their tax bill and causes economic hardship on townships or smaller communities.

We believe that OEPA's permitting process is ineffective and unreasonable. A permit, later withdrawn was issued even though a facility would be built above the Great Miami Valley Sole Source aquifer that provides water to over 400,000 citizens, is located 1.5 miles from a cement company that regularly blast the surface for mining purposes and allow these companies to hire their own "experts" to prepare reports for OEPA. All these factors were provided to OEPA during the community comment period, but the permit was still issued. OEPA routinely states that they have no control over the following issues: local zoning, increase in road usage, property values and noise. OEPA issues permits before any of the issues I just mentioned can even be determined by local jurisdictions. The company is free to start building before they even obtain a local zoning permit, or the citizens can file an appeal through the ERAC process. OEPA has now caused local communities' money because they won't due their due diligence.

Industries that have negative impacts on communities are best served by townships and counties which can regulate where biosolid lagoons and biodigestion facilities come to be located through zoning resolutions. Ohio citizens have a right for our voices and concerns to be heard and taken into consideration. The citizens of Ohio deserve better.

Thank You for your time,

Melissa Sheets