

**Ohio House of Representatives
Public Utilities Committee
Proponent Testimony
Ohio House Bill 79**

*Rebecca Mellino, The Nature Conservancy in Ohio
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Good morning, Chair Stein, Vice Chair Blasdel, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the House Public Utilities Committee, I am Rebecca Mellino, Policy Associate for The Nature Conservancy in Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony as a proponent of House Bill 79.

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization with chapters in all 50 states and projects in over 70 countries. We are a non-partisan, science-based organization that seeks to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We work collaboratively with businesses, farmers, sportsmen groups, governments, and local communities to develop pragmatic solutions to conservation challenges, including land conservation, water quality, and climate change. More than 65,000 Ohioans are Nature Conservancy supporters, and we own and manage over 20,000 acres of nature preserves throughout the state.

TNC is a strong proponent of this bill to allow energy efficiency programs in Ohio which will improve the reliability and affordability of electricity that Ohioans use every day. When looking at the energy system as a whole, energy efficiency is the low hanging fruit to lower energy bills for consumers while improving air quality. Having more energy efficient products in your home is the best way to maintain comfort while also saving energy. For example, if you install a more efficient HVAC system, you can set your thermostat to the same temperature as before but use less energy to achieve that temperature. Utility energy efficiency programs are a great way to make those products more available to their customers.

Programs that can be designed by local utilities are better able to meet specific customer needs and can be the most effective at reducing energy consumption. Utilities have information about what percentage of their customers own their homes and might need programs to address water heating and HVAC. They know the age of homes in their service territory and could design programs to help customers afford insulation or other weatherization services best suited to older homes. Utilities with smart meter technology might want to offer programs that have smart capabilities that could be used in DSM (demand-side management) events, making energy more reliable for everyone in Ohio. By making programs available at the more local level, Ohioans will be better served and more able to participate in these cost and energy saving measures.

This bill also says that programs must be cost effective, they will save more money than they will cost to run. The money being saved will go directly to the Ohioans who participate in the programs and help them with their monthly budgets with lower electricity bills. When a customer participates in a program by having a smart thermostat installed for example, they will save that money every month for the life of the thermostat which could be longer than they are paying into the energy efficiency program.

By lowering the demand for energy throughout the state and having the capability to save even more energy during DSM events, energy efficiency programs will make our energy more reliable and help all Ohioans even if they opt out of participating in the programs. Ohioans deserve clean air, and affordable, reliable energy. Utility offered energy efficiency programs would be a strong approach to provide Ohioans this opportunity. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

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