

Proponent Testimony on HB 79
Mrs. Catherine Duffy and The Rev. Craig Foster
Ohio House Public Utilities Committee
April 26, 2023

Dear Chairman Stein, Vice Chair Robb Blasdel, Ranking Member Weinstein, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you very much for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 79, the bipartisan bill to create a new energy efficiency program with Ohio's electric distribution utilities. We are the co-chairs of the Creation Care and Environmental Justice Commission of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio and are writing to share our experience with energy efficiency rebates and why we support this bill.

We have been working to educate our congregations on how investing in energy efficiency benefits their community, the world, as well as saving churches money on their monthly utility bills. Before HB 6 went into effect, several of our churches invested in energy efficiency retrofits for which they spent hundreds of thousands of dollars. Utility rebates – even those covering only a small share of the costs - were a powerful incentive to taking action. These retrofits enable churches to divert the savings to mission instead of building costs.

Most of our congregations contribute to community-based emergency assistance programs which include cash assistance to help financially-stressed neighbors avoid utility shut-offs.

As Ohioans continue to struggle with rising food costs and rents, our churches, interfaith partners, and community emergency assistance programs are bracing for a big rise in electric rates this summer. We particularly appreciate the priority HB 79 gives to low-income residential customers.

By helping households afford the upfront cost of making their homes more efficient, you will be delivering multiple benefits to Ohioans:

- Reducing the energy burden of Ohio households,
- Thereby increasing housing security for low-income families
- Reducing peak demand and the risk of black-outs affecting millions of customers, especially during heat waves
- Reducing particulate emissions from fossil fuel generation, a major cause of acute and chronic lung and cardiovascular disease including asthma and heart attacks

As leaders in our diocese's Creation Care Commission, we are urging our congregations to reduce their use of electricity from fossil fuel plants as part of the stewardship necessary to mitigate climate change, whose harms and risks are multiplying both in Ohio and worldwide. By restoring utilities' energy conservation incentives for customers, you will help to reduce the growing risk of major financial harm and human suffering. Thank you for this chance to share our hopes and experience in testimony in support of HB 79.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Catharine Duffy, All Saints Episcopal Church, New Albany
The Rev. Craig Foster, Deacon, St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Bexley
Co-Chairs, Creation Care and Environmental Justice Commission, Diocese of Southern Ohio