



House Public Utilities Committee  
HB 79 - Proponent Testimony  
Sarah Spence, Executive Director  
June 21, 2023

Chairman Stein, Vice Chair Robb Blasdel, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the Public Utilities Committee: thank you for allowing me to give proponent testimony for House Bill 79. My name is Sarah Spence, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Ohio Conservative Energy Forum (OHCEF).

OHCEF was founded in 2015 to provide a forum for conservatives to discuss a diverse, all-of-the above energy portfolio – one that includes not only existing sources of traditional energy generation, but one that also seeks to expand the development of clean and renewable energy sources. OHCEF believes that clean energy and energy made clean through technology can strengthen both our economy and our national security while providing unmatched opportunities for Ohio-led innovation and job creation.

The cheapest and cleanest form of energy is the kilowatt hour that we don't need to produce. Smartly crafted energy waste reduction programs use proven conservation practices to reduce energy usage and lessen the need for increased energy production across our grid. HB 79 is a product of work with utilities, environmental groups and interested parties to create a smartly crafted, free-market, consumer-choice energy waste reduction program.

HB 79 would allow residential customers to take advantage of energy waste reduction programs automatically; however, if they find that the program isn't working for them or simply do not want to participate, they can choose to opt-out. For larger businesses that may not have the technical expertise or staff to help with energy waste measures, they can choose to opt into the program so they can get the benefits. This allows for more flexibility than the previously mandated programs.

The legislation makes other improvements to the previously mandated program. The cost to residential customers is capped at \$1.50 per participating customer, \$7.50 for non-residential retail customers and \$350 for industrial and mercantile customers who opt into the program. Utilities are capped on how much they can spend to run a program. There's also a specific requirement for the PUCO to audit these programs to make sure residents are seeing more benefit from the program than the cost.



Most importantly, the legislation focuses the voluntary program on proven types of energy waste initiatives and rejects other forms of energy waste reduction that were counted toward the mandated percentage reduction, but didn't actually reduce energy consumption. This will ensure that customers enrolled in the program will see true savings on their bill and reduce their energy usage.

We'd like to thank the bill co-sponsors, Rep. Seitz and Rep. Sweeny for their diligent work in working with all interested parties to craft this piece of legislation.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify in support of HB 79. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.