



STATE SENATOR BILL DEMORA 25th District

Chair Reineke, Vice-chair McColley, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee. Thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony for Senate Bill 229, which would change the Public Utilities Commission nominating council and nomination process.

The House Bill 6 scandal, subsequent trials, and the continued uncertainty around our energy regulation have made it clear that we need to fix the process. We need to ensure that the PUCO is fulfilling its role as a non-biased regulator and not taking part in a multimillion-dollar bribery scandal.

The first way to ensure that is to make sure that the public is being represented on the council. SB 229 would require that an actual consumer representative, chosen by the Governor from a list provided by the Consumer's Council, be on the board. This bill will also mandate that any future commissioners not have any prior ties to any entities subject to PUCO regulation.

Another needed change is making sure that the Nominating Council is looking out for the interests of all Ohioans and not letting bad actors slip onto the board. This bill will do that by adding three members to the nominating council: A representative of minority communities appointed by the Governor and two public members, one appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives and the other by the Minority Leader of the Senate. These changes will diversify the membership of the nominating council, enhance transparency, and reduce potential conflicts of interest.

Finally, this bill will increase the transparency of the PUCO nomination process by requiring that the public have access to the process. The Nominating Council must have public interviews and limits the terms of council members to prevent the entrenchment of any outside interests into the PUCO.

We need to ensure that we are all working to bring transparency into the process to make sure nothing like HB 6 ever returns by passing SB 229.

Now, I would like to pass the mic to my joint sponsor, Senator Hicks-Hudson, and after that, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you,