

OHIO CONSERVATIVE ENERGY FORUM

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
HB 79 - Proponent Testimony
Shayna Fritz, Executive Director
December 3, 2024

Chairman Reineke, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Energy and Public Utilities Committee: thank you for allowing me to provide written proponent testimony for House Bill 79. My name is Shayna Fritz, 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 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 our economy and 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 the result 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 bills 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 provide written testimony in support of HB 79. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have by email at sfritz@ohcef.org.