

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee,

December 2, 2024

My name is Reverend Dean VanFarowe and I am the Ohio Outreach Coordinator with the Evangelical Environmental Network. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written comment on energy efficiency in Ohio.

As a pastor and Christian, I believe when Jesus said “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me,” he was thinking of the most vulnerable among us, like children, the elderly and those most impacted by health issues related to pollution in Ohio. Energy efficiency is one tool to defend the health of those Jesus told us to care for.

As Christians, we believe in defending life, especially that of our children and vulnerable neighbors. HB 79 provides a wide variety of benefits. These include lowering energy consumption and cost for consumers, improving the reliability of the grid, and creating targeted efficiency programs for low-income communities that reduce their energy burden. These programs will also reduce harmful air pollution and toxics that have a negative impact on the health of Ohioans but pose particular harm to our children's health.

I am excited about HB 79 because it will allow utilities to create programs that incentivize customers to purchase energy-efficient technologies. By empowering more Ohioans to make their homes more energy efficient, the benefits are far-reaching, including cutting energy waste, improving air quality, creating a more reliable electrical grid, and lowering energy bills across Ohio. All these benefits come at very little cost to consumers like me who are on tight budgets.

Energy waste reduction programs reduce demand for electricity, which in turn reduces harmful emissions. Air pollution harms the hearts, minds, and lungs of Ohioans with asthma attacks, heart attacks, and respiratory disease. HB 79 will help combat these negative impacts.

This bill is also good for our economy. Savings from reduced energy usage are expected to directly benefit all Ohioans. It is estimated that customers will save up to \$3.3 billion over a ten-year period, as energy efficiency technologies will save consumers money year after year. HB 79 also specifically supports programs for low-income families across Ohio to reduce their energy burden. As a Christian called to love my neighbor, these benefits of HB 79 are especially important to me.

Additionally, this legislation will allow Ohioans to immediately take advantage of energy efficiency benefits and complementing rebates available in the federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

On top of cost savings for consumers, the energy efficiency programs reinstated by HB 79 are expected to bolster Ohio's economy with new clean energy jobs. According to Clean Jobs Midwest, clean energy jobs in Ohio grew over five times faster than the state's overall economy in 2023, with a majority of those jobs related to energy efficiency, with 78,744 jobs in energy efficiency in the state.

HB 79 will improve the resilience of our grid, reduce harmful pollution from wasted energy, support our economy, and lower Ohioans' energy bills.

As a Christian, I ask you to vote YES on House Bill 79 to defend the health of Ohioans, especially our children, and the economic well-being of our great state.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dean VanFarowe". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Thank you," text.

Dean VanFarowe
Ohio Outreach Coordinator
Evangelical Environmental Network