

**Association of Ohio Drinking Water Agencies, Inc.**  
**Jeff Bronowski, Member**  
**Sub. H.B. 93 Opponent Testimony**  
**Senate Local Government Committee**  
**November 19, 2024**

Chairwoman O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member DeMora, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Association of Ohio Drinking Water Agencies, Inc. ("AODWA"). My name is Jeff Bronowski, and I serve as the Water Superintendent of Akron Water Supply Bureau, which is a member of AODWA. AODWA opposes Substitute House Bill 93.

AODWA represents the interests of Ohio's drinking water agencies. AODWA's members include the cities of Akron, Avon Lake, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Delaware, Fairfield, Lima, Salem, Toledo, Warren, the Del-Co Water Company, Greene County, and the Southwest Regional Water District. Together, our membership provides water service to over half the citizens of Ohio.

AODWA has many concerns with the legislation. However, my testimony will focus on just three of these concerns.

First, the legislation would restrict municipalities in recovering unpaid balances. The bill would restrict placement of liens on rented properties, which would add frequent and repeated administrative obligations on municipalities. For any unpaid balances that exceed a "termination amount," the bill would make it extremely difficult for utilities to recover from property owners using liens.

Second, those costs would be passed on to ratepayers. Municipal utilities must turn to ratepayers to cover anticipated shortfalls caused by HB 93. This bill will directly lead to higher water and sewer bills for Ohioans. These costs are not worth the marginal benefit for landlords. The bill's proponents have pointed to energy companies as an example of utilities that have managed to contract directly with tenants. However, the experience of energy company billing proves our point. I have attached to my testimony an example of an energy bill in which the company charges all paying customers for the losses that could not be recouped from nonpaying customers. They are already forcing paying customers to cover the costs of nonpaying customers. There is no question that public ratepayers would pay for the benefit that landlords are seeking.

The bill would effectively require a fee (you could even call it a tax) on paying Ohioans for the benefit of landlords and real estate investors engaging in a private business transaction. The people responsible for paying the bill are not just those in Columbus, but also in places like Dayton, Lima, and Warren.

Third, the bill tries to solve a problem that is already being addressed. AODWA members already expend significant effort to avoid the incurrence of large unpaid tenant invoices, which we believe is one of the primary purposes of the legislation. Many utilities have prompt termination of service policies that initiate disconnection for nonpayment. They also use utility bill relief policies to eliminate large bills for incidents such as toilet leaks, burst pipes, and similar events, which protects the incurrence of significant utility bills. Additionally, some utilities send out courtesy leak notices when an automatic meter reading system detects a potential problem, to prevent the residence from running up a large bill. Based on qualified income, the utilities also use state and federal resources to cover the costs of utility bills. Some also complete meter readings as a courtesy for owners at no cost when tenants move in or out. Many permit multiple bills to be sent, i.e., one bill sent to the owner with one sent to the tenant, again to ensure that any billing issues are remedied promptly. Finally, utilities frequently allow payment arrangements (i.e., installment plans) for tenants when the property owner consents. Each of these measures is taken to avoid the incurrence of significant costs on the part of tenants, without prompting the variety of indirect expenses that this legislation would introduce.

In surveying our membership, we discovered a few things that I want to highlight about some of the practices addressed by the proponents of this legislation. Last week the witnesses illustrated a few of the practices in a few cities. Sub. HB 93 would dismantle the entire regulatory system in place for cities across the state when some of the very things they noted are already being done by several water utilities. Many cities have established effective and beneficial working relationships with property owners. Because of the variety in utility operations and available solutions, property owners and investors should engage with their local officials instead of seeking a unilateral change across the state.

For example, in Columbus, both the Owner and the Tenant sign a “Tenant Billing Agreement.” The bill is sent to the Tenant since they are being requested by the owner to pay the water & sewer bill. Columbus also sends a courtesy copy to the Owner. The signed agreement also clearly outlines the Owner’s ultimate responsibility for the water and sewer charges. Thus, the property owner is aware of the water usage at any given property and have the information necessary to manage their business.

In the past, Ohio’s water utilities and the General Assembly have worked together to craft thoughtful solutions based on a more complete picture of utility operations and the essential service that they provide. Perhaps we could convene a working group and come together to address some of the concerns of the proponents of this legislation. It’s worth noting, however, that what may work for a larger water utility may be a near practical impossibility for smaller water utilities and vice versa. Sub. HB 93 would change state law in a way that could have costly consequences for ratepayers throughout the state due to a few one-off examples offered by proponents.

As a result, AODWA and its member agencies strongly oppose Sub. HB 93’s proposals to restrict municipalities from recovering unpaid invoices. At a minimum, we request that the committee not move this bill in current form while the many issues in this 28-page measure can be addressed. We also support the testimony of the Association of Ohio Metropolitan

Wastewater Agencies and the City of Canton. Chairwoman O'Brien and Members of the Committee, your attention and consideration in this matter are very much appreciated.



Account No

**Usage-based charges** come to more than 33 cents for every 1,000 cubic feet (Mcf) of gas you burn and involve five separate charges. Included are 16 cents for a hidden federal excise tax, 4 cents to fund a state program assisting poor families with heating bills, 3 cents for consumer energy efficiency programs and 3 cents recouping Dominion's losses from deadbeat customers who could not be located.

Meter Reading  
01/31/2019

For questions about Dominion Energy Ohio charges call 1-800-362-7557

Credits and

Balance fr

Payment o

Balance

Current Ch

Dominion

Basic Servi

Usage-Based Charges

17.7 MCF @ \$ .3338

Gross Receipts Tax (4.6044%)

**Total Dominion Energy Ohio Charges**

For questions about Dominion Energy Ohio charges, call us at 1-800-362-7557.

**Constellation Newenergy-gas Division Llc**

**Standard Choice Offer (SCO)**

Gas Cost 17.7 Mcf @ \$4.785

Sales Tax

**Total CONSTELLATION NEWENERGY-GAS**

For questions about gas supply costs, contact CONSTELLATION

NEWENERGY-GAS DIVISION LLC at 855-465-1244 or 9960 Corporate

Campus Dr Louisville, Ky 40223 Suite 2000 or www.constellation.com.

**Total Current Charges**

**Total Account Balance**

Rate Schedule: Energy Choice Transportation Service - Residential

\$37.71

37.71 CR

\$0.00

\$28.14

5.91

1.57

**\$35.62**

\$84.69

5.72

**\$90.41**

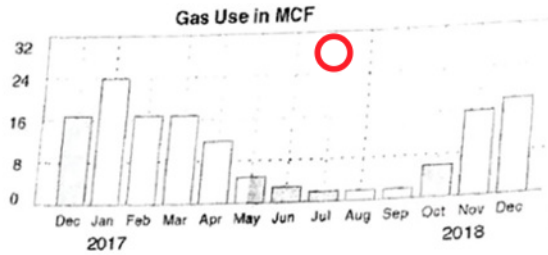
**\$126.03**

**\$126.03**

**Monthly Usage Comparison**

Average Daily Temperature For This Billing Period

2017	2018
32°F	34°F



Avg Monthly Use: 10.3 MCF.  
Total Annual Use: 123.9 MCF.

**Billing Period and Meter Readings**

Date	Read Type	Reading	Difference
Dec 28, 2018	Actual	921.5	
Nov 27, 2018	Actual	903.8	17.7

**MCF Used in 31 Days**

**LEASE PAY** Account Balance of \$126.03 by Jan 18, 2019 to Avoid Late Payment Charge of 1.5% per month.