

House Committees  
Public Insurance and Pensions, Ranking  
Member  
Education Committee  
Energy Committee  
Local Government Committee  
Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review



Contact Information  
77 S. High Street Columbus, OH 43215  
<https://ohiohouse.gov/members/sean-p-brennan>  
Rep14@ohiohouse.gov  
614-466-3485

## **Representative Sean Patrick Brennan 14<sup>th</sup> House District**

### **Sponsor Testimony**

#### **H.B. 158: Enact the Consumer Utility Billing Transparency Act**

Chairman Holmes, Vice Chairman Klopfenstein, Ranking Member Glassburn, and Members of the House Energy Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 158, the “Consumer Utility Billing Transparency Act.”

Utility bills affect nearly every household in Ohio. Whether you are a homeowner, a renter, a small or larger business owner, or a farmer, you rely on essential services like electricity, natural gas, and water to live and work. But for too many Ohioans, including myself, understanding their utility bills has become an exercise in futility. Hidden fees, obscure riders, and bundled costs leave families and small businesses confused, frustrated, and powerless to make informed choices or hold providers accountable. *Scarlett and Gary Buckeye* should not have to be accountants or attorneys to understand a basic household bill.

We have all heard the stories—residents unsure why their bill spiked suddenly, families unaware they were on variable rate plans, or customers being charged for mysterious fees with no clear explanation. This is not just frustrating—it undermines trust in our utility systems and makes it harder for people to budget and plan.

The Utility Bill Transparency Act addresses these problems head-on. This is not a new burden for utility companies. These costs already exist—they are already calculated. What we are asking for is transparency: that these numbers be presented clearly and understandably to the people who pay them.

This legislation does not take sides. It does not add new regulations or costs for providers, nor does it restructure utilities or regulate prices. Instead, it sets a straightforward standard: utility bills (electric, natural gas, and water) should be clear, concise, and easy to understand. It ensures that every Ohioan can see exactly what they are paying for in a detailed, itemized bill - whether it is generation, transmission, distribution, supply charges, taxes, riders, trackers, and additional service fees—and know where their money is going.

An itemized bill empowers consumers to ask the right questions, check for errors, monitor their usage, seek better rates to save money, and understand what investments are being made in their communities. And it helps us, as lawmakers and stewards of public interest to hold utility companies accountable for how they operate and charge. We can better shine a light on inefficiencies, on opportunities for reform, and on ways to improve our energy systems for everyone.

Transparency also builds trust and promotes accountability. When utility companies know their charges are easily understood, they're more likely to act in good faith, which can go a long way in greatly needed public relations.

Mr. Chairman, H.B. 158 aligns with Operating Concepts #3 and #5 of this committee's mission and vision statement. As a reminder to all, Operating Concept #3 calls for "Increase[d] electricity purchasing options and transparency," while #5 calls for "Increasing public awareness and advocacy." What better way to bring these goals to life for our constituents than to provide them with transparency and awareness than with a bill that delineates all of the things they are paying for.

This is not a partisan issue. This is about fairness. It's about giving people the tools they need to make informed decisions, manage their expenses, and hold their providers accountable. It's a principle of good governance. By supporting the Utility Bill Transparency Act, very similar to H.B. 15, we are saying to the people of Ohio: *we hear you, we see your concerns, and we believe you deserve to understand the bills you pay.*

In short, the Utility Bill Transparency Act is a common-sense measure that strengthens consumer rights without creating unnecessary burdens on utilities. It brings clarity to confusion, and accountability to a system that too often operates behind closed doors. This is especially important now as utility rates rise and household budgets are stretched thin - Ohioans deserve to know where every dollar is going.

I want to thank my joint sponsor Representative Thomas for joining me on this important consumer friendly bill.

Chairman Holmes, Vice Chairman Klopfenstein, Ranking Member Glassburn, and Members of the House Energy Committee, thank you for your consideration of House Bill 158. I would be happy to answer any of your questions.