



Ohio Environmental Council
[Action Fund]

May 7, 2025

Proponent Testimony - House Bill 158
Ohio House Energy Committee

Chair Holmes, Vice Chair Klopfenstein, Ranking Member Glassburn, and members of the Ohio House Energy Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 158, the Consumer Utility Billing Transparency Act. My name is Jesse Velazquez, and I am the Climate Justice Manager at the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund (OEC AF). The OEC Action Fund's mission is to protect the environment and health of all Ohio communities and empower our communities to thrive in harmony with the environment. Transparency in how our essential services are delivered and billed is foundational to that mission.

Utility bills are one of the most direct ways Ohioans engage with our energy and water systems. Yet for far too many families, deciphering these bills is a frustrating and opaque experience. Line items are bundled, riders are unclear, and customers are left wondering not only how their bill got so high, but what they can do about it.

House Bill 158 is a commonsense solution that empowers Ohioans to understand what they are paying for, and why. By requiring clear itemization of all major utility charges and add-on costs, this bill provides people with the tools they need to make informed decisions, seek accountability, and plan for the future.

Transparency is not just a consumer protection issue, it promotes good governance, equity, and smart economic decisions. When customers understand what they're paying for, they're more likely to stay in energy efficiency programs, choose clean energy offerings, and responsibly manage usage, all of which improve grid reliability and resilience. HB 158 also advances transparency in water billing, where rising costs demand clarity to support affordability and informed decision-making.

HB 158 does not create new costs for utility providers, nor does it impose heavy-handed regulation. The information already exists, this bill simply ensures that it's shared clearly and fairly with the customers who foot the bill. It's a measure rooted in good governance, aligned with this committee's stated priorities to increase public awareness and consumer choice. The OEC Action Fund urges support for House Bill 158.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions.

Jesse Velazquez
Climate Justice Manager
Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund