

February 20, 2026

Ohio House of Representatives

Date: February 18, 2026

Committee: House Energy Committee

Bill: HB 173 – Utility Consumer Protection

Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jessica Wilkins-Bibbs, and I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 173, which addresses the urgent need for oversight and consumer protection for entities like Nationwide Energy Partners (NEP).

I reside in a **1,300 sq. ft. condominium** in the West Albany area. For the billing cycle dated **January 5, 2026 – February 6, 2026**, my NEP bill totaled **\$380.60**—including **\$331.29 for electricity** and **\$45.31 for water and sewer**. My electricity usage was **1,670 kWh**, and water usage was **140 CF**, according to NEP’s own meter readings. The usage rates are unusually high after speaking with AEP customers in Columbus and surrounding suburbs, double, in fact. Also, NEP does not provide a breakdown of the per kWh or CF pricing in their bills, like AEP does. Despite these figures, my thermostat has remained at **69 degrees all winter**. To maximize energy efficiency, I service my furnace twice a year and change the filter every three months. Yet, my costs remain disproportionately, unreasonably high. Based on the number of complaints filed with PUCO, the Attorney General’s Office, and the Better Business Bureau, this has snowballed into a huge problem for Central Ohio and beyond, one that has not adequately been addressed in over ten years. After filing complaints with those entities and finding no resolution, I am providing this testimony. Unfortunately, efforts by law firms, local news stations, the Columbus Dispatch, and an active appeal with the Ohio Supreme Court have not yet materialized into relief for consumers.

The problem is systemic: **NEP is not regulated by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO)**. This means consumers like me lack the protections that regulated utilities such as AEP provide—protections that ensure fair rates, transparency, and dispute resolution. Without regulation, residents are vulnerable to unpredictable and excessive charges.

This is not just about one bill; it is a matter of **principle and affordability**. Many Ohioans living in communities serviced by NEP face similar hardships. Compounding this issue, the

CEO of NEP also owns Lifestyle Communities, which develops and manages properties throughout Columbus and surrounding suburbs. As a result, this **creates a monopoly** where residents have no choice and no accountability.

House Bill 173 is essential to ensure that companies like NEP operate under the same consumer protection standards as other utilities. Ohioans deserve fairness, transparency, and relief from unregulated billing practices that compromise affordability and consumer rights.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB 173 and protect Ohio residents from these predatory practices.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JWB', is positioned above the printed name.

Jessica Wilkins-Bibbs