



March 18, 2026

**Opposition Testimony - Senate Bill 219
Ohio House Natural Resources Committee**

Chairwoman Blasdel, Vice Chair Fischer, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the House Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Substitute Senate Bill 219. My name is Nathan Johnson, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund in **opposition** to this bill.

While Substitute SB 219 contains some improvements, such as provisions protecting the integrity of the well plugging fund, the bill limits the state to requiring no more than **sub-market compensation** for public lands leasing, fails to prohibit surface occupancy of state public lands, and shortens the potential timeframe for public input on public lands leasing nominations.

SB 219 Prohibits the State from Requiring Fair Market Value for Public Lands Leases

RC 155.33(I) seeks to change current law by prohibiting the state from requiring any bonus payments; and, by prohibiting the state from requiring any royalties above a one-eighth (12.5%) gross landowner royalty. However, bonus payments are industry standard for horizontal leases and market royalty rates. And, the one-eighth royalty is an antiquated rate that has been well below market since the advent of horizontal development in the state more than a decade ago. In other words, SB 219 **forces the state to offer public lands leases far below market value**. Instead, the amount of reimbursement the state receives for the leasing and fracking of state parks and public lands is left entirely to the discretion of oil and gas operators that bid on state parcels. This is an unreasonable result, and section 155.33(I) should be stricken from the bill.

SB 219 Continues to Allow for Surface Development on State Parks and Public Lands

Current law does not prohibit surface occupancy on state public lands, including the placement of well pads, battery tanks, and compressor stations. SB 219 should be amended to prohibit new state oil and gas leases from allowing surface occupancy.

Reduced Opportunity for Public Oversight

The bill shortens the timeline for approving oil and gas leases on Ohio's public lands to just 90 days for review, 60 days to award, and 30 days to sign. Compressing the process this way leaves little time for public input or thorough environmental review. Decisions about fracking on lands that Ohioans own and cherish should be deliberate, transparent, and protective of public health, not rushed.



Ohio Environmental Council
[Action Fund]

Conclusion

The OEC Action Fund urges this committee to **reject Senate Bill 219 in its current form**. Ohioans deserve an energy policy that protects our communities, respects local voices, and ensures strong, transparent oversight. We stand ready to work with lawmakers on solutions that accelerate well plugging and reduce pollution *without* compromising the public interest.

Sincerely,

Nathan Johnson
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Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund