

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS AGAINST MINING MAD RIVER TOWNSHIP
IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 181
Before the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
June 17, 2025

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

Good afternoon. My name is Kathy Estep. I live in Mad River Township in Clark County. I am a retired government teacher and was a Mad River Township trustee for 20 years. I come to you today to share concerns about SB 181. I speak on behalf of Citizens Against Mining Mad River Township, also known as CAM. We are a non-profit group of homeowners, organized in 2017, to oppose a proposed 420-acre deep limestone quarry in our township. Within a 2-mile radius of this quarry site, there are more than 700 homeowners. It is our goal to protect our water resources, and preserve our farmland and community.

We are in favor of reasonable regulations; however, it is not reasonable to reduce opportunities for regulation, oversight, and accountability for an industry that swiftly changes the landscape forever and presents the potential for significant loss of quality of life for the residents and the environment. In Mr. Barger's testimony, he states the Ohio Aggregates & Industrial Minerals Association worked several years with ODNR Division of Mineral Resources Management to create this legislation. It is a compromise reached without input from the public. One concern is with private contractors who may have close financial and personal ties to the mining industry being hired to prepare hydrology reports.

How does a community coexist with potential long-term consequences like decreased quality or quantity of water in wells, possible groundwater contamination, increased truck traffic, blasting, loss of farmland, flooding, air pollution, noise and stress?

We are concerned that the proposed legislation usurps the authority of the local planning commissions, Board of Zoning Appeals and Rural Zoning Commission as well as other local authorities. By using a history of prior mining as a free pass to expand a mine without adequate review and control, the legislation reduces or even eliminates the role of local government. It does not allow for consideration of changed conditions, or critical local issues that have occurred since the earlier mining.

In our situation, if SB 181 had been in effect in 2017, an existing permit for a 21.8-acre gravel pit could have been amended to add 398.8 acres without a separate permit, eliminating the need for a dewatering model. The mining operator could have mined the 420.6 acres with just a conditional use permit. What started as a small gravel pit would now impact over 700 households in a two-mile radius and thousands more when considering quality of life.

We are opposed to a mining permit that does not expire. There should be more stringent oversight, not less. Our research shows all renewals have been approved. Many local conditions can change over time; for example, housing developments and density, public utilities, county land use plans, etc.

We are opposed to allowing a mining permit to be extended to non-contiguous land anywhere within a township with a simple amendment. The amendment process is much less rigorous than a new permit. Land use and conditions in a single township often vary dramatically.

We are opposed to permitting underground mining to any operator with a surface mining permit. Specific site conditions could impact underground mining considerations differently than surface mining and present very different production and safety concerns.

We are opposed to the language in this legislation that relieves the mining operator from liability to repair, restore, mitigate or remediate any building, structure, or personal property damages from subsidence or any other unintended consequence of mining in a residential area. Our concern is in protecting our community.

Do our communities exist for people? Or do our communities exist for resource exploitation without a thorough and detailed review of a mining project, or mining expansion, and its impact on the surrounding area and the residents of our state. We need a process for application and renewal that includes meaningful opportunities for current site evaluation and local input. We need a process that protects our citizens and their communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.