

Senate Bill 181, Opponent Testimony
Carol Culbertson, Ohio resident
Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
June 17, 2025

Thank you to the members of the Senate Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee for allowing me to participate in this legislative process today. My name is Carol Culbertson and I live in Mad River Township, Clark County, Ohio on a parcel of land adjacent to a proposed limestone mine.

I am a member of Citizens Against Mining, CAM, which was formed in 2017 to oppose this limestone mine. Many fundraisers, donations and hard work by the members of CAM has allowed this community to raise tens of thousands of dollars to defend our homes and our way of life. We believe that even though products which are mined are essential, this area in Mad River Township, with its sensitive aquatic interplay between the surface and ground water is the wrong place to site a deep limestone mine. There are springs, seeps, waterfalls, fens, creeks and wetlands all interconnected and flowing. We believe any lowering of the water table will have disastrous affects on the flora and fauna, not to mention the two hundred plus homeowners with private wells surrounding the 420 acre mining area.

The “Community Be Damned!” Perhaps the aggregate companies are having difficulty obtaining the zoning and permits from local governments because they have this attitude. They refuse to admit that communities are changed forever by their mining activities: dust, noise, falling property values, traffic, fly rock, loss of water in wells, loss of farmland, stream deterioration with large discharges, air pollution, etc. Underground mines do not solve any of these issues and yet this bill does not address any of these concerns. However it does state that the company is not responsible to replace land or structures damaged due to subsidence. Again, a good neighbor? I think not.

I fear that Senate Bill 181 has taken away what little oversight there is now. At present, from what I have witnessed, a company needs only fill out an application and submit it to Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mineral Resources (ODNR) with the proper application fee and the permit is automatically granted. The application need not be complete or accurate when the permit is issued. For example, on one recent application the applicant left several questions blank and claimed there was no groundwater on his mining parcel when in fact, the fastest flow rate of groundwater in the state, was documented by a hydrologist working for the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency a few years before this operator took possession of the property.

This is an example of the poor oversight provided at present by the powers that be. What will happen to this lack of oversight when lifetime permits are issued, inspections moved to a five year cycle and land is allowed to be added with an amendment to an existing surface mine if in the same township? It may reduce paperwork, staff time and resources but I contend it will reduce the Chief's ability to adequately address the oversight and managerial duties inherent in his position within ODNR. This bill puts much power in his hands but does not garner any involvement of local governmental agencies nor the people living within close proximity of the mining area. The aggregate companies benefit greatly from lack of oversight and accountability when reporting to ODNR.

As this bill is written, I see the possibility of gross negligence from these profit driven companies. I often think, if given the chance, these aggregate companies would love the opportunity to dig up and cart off all of Ohio. (And they are doing a fine job of it in my backyard – Greene and Clark County.) This bill in its current form gives them carte blanche to do as they please with no one to stop them!

Major changes must be addressed before Senate Bill 181 becomes law!

1. Seek local citizen input in the initial negotiations of this legislation
2. Allow and encourage input from the local people, experts and the governing agencies before mines are permitted.
3. Do not issue lifetime permits
4. Provide for adequate protections for the local communities' interests and needs
5. Do not be allowed land to be added to an existing permit just because they operate another underground mine within the township
6. Compensate property owners for any damage caused by mining operations, underground or surface
7. Provide more oversight, not less, when approving a mining application
8. Hire independent consultants for any hydrology studies