



Ohio Environmental Council

[Action Fund]

November 19, 2025
Opposition Testimony - Senate Bill 219
Ohio Senate Energy Committee

Chairman Chavez, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Energy 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.

The OEC Action Fund supports responsible energy development that protects communities, landowners, and public lands. While Substitute SB 219 contains limited improvements, such as provisions to accelerate well plugging and clarify how plugging funds are managed, the overall bill weakens public transparency, undermines local protections, and reduces state oversight of the oil and gas industry.

Reduced Transparency and 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.

Weakened Local Authority and Public Safety

Sub SB 219 maintains a strict three-year cap on road use and maintenance agreements between operators and local governments, limiting communities' ability to ensure fair repair of damaged roads. It also expands permit "fast-tracking," allowing up to ten expedited drilling or plugging permits per company each year and reducing ODNR's discretion to deny those requests. Together, these changes favor speed over safety and shift risk and cost onto local taxpayers.

An additional new provision at section 1509.23 restricts ODNR's ability to require a company to pause production even during safety or emergency-response situations. This language could hinder the state's ability to protect people and the environment in an emergency.

Narrowed Accountability and Landowner Rights

The substitute bill weakens landowner protections by shortening the period to challenge expired leases and curtailing administrative appeal rights under Ohio's long-standing Chapter 119 process. These changes make it harder for residents to hold companies accountable or to seek relief when operations harm property or health.

Limited Positives Do Not Outweigh the Harms

We recognize and support efforts to improve well-plugging programs and safeguard cleanup funds from diversion. However, those limited positive steps do not offset the broader rollback of transparency, public input, and environmental oversight found throughout the bill.

Conclusion

The OEC Action Fund urges this committee to reject Substitute 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 safety, accountability, or the public interest.