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Chair Wilkin, Vice-chair Reineke, members of the Senate Public Utilities Committee. Thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony for Senate Bill 99, which would reform the Public Utilities Commission (PUCO) nominating council and nomination process.

The House Bill 6 scandal, subsequent trials, and the continued uncertainty around our energy regulation have made it clear: the system needs reform. We must ensure that PUCO remains a nonpartisan, unbiased regulator—not a participant in multimillion-dollar bribery schemes.

The first way to ensure that is to make sure that the public is being represented on the council. SB 99 would require that an actual consumer representative, chosen by the Governor from a list provided by the Consumer's Council, be on the board. This bill will also mandate that any future commissioners do not have any prior ties to any entities subject to PUCO regulation.

Another needed change is making sure that the Nominating Council is looking out for the interests of all Ohioans and not letting bad actors slip onto the board. This bill will do that by adding three members to the nominating council: A representative of minority communities appointed by the Governor and two public members, one appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives and the other by the Minority Leader of the Senate. These changes will diversify the membership of the nominating council, enhance transparency, and reduce potential conflicts of interest.

Finally, this bill will increase the transparency of the PUCO nomination process by requiring that the public have access to the process. The Nominating Council must have public interviews and limits the terms of council members to prevent the entrenchment of any outside interests into the PUCO.

We need to ensure that we are all working to bring transparency into the process to make sure nothing like HB 6 ever returns by passing SB 99.

With that, I'll turn it over to my joint sponsor, Senator Hicks-Hudson, and I'm happy to take any questions afterward.

Thank you.