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Chair Wilkin, Vice-chair Reineke, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Senate Public Utilities Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for Senate Bill 99, which would change the Public Utilities Commission nominating Council and nomination process.

SB 99 significantly improves the current law, offering a robust solution to prevent future scandals like House Bill 6. It not only promotes impartiality and transparency but also ensures a more diverse representation on the PUCO Nominating Council.

The first way SB 99 addresses the PUCO Nominating Council is by adding three additional members. This change will ensure that more diverse backgrounds and thoughts are represented, fostering a fair and inclusive process that puts the best candidate for all on the Commission. The requirement for some current members to be members of a bona fide consumer protection organization further ensures that the people of Ohio, who the PUCO is supposed to have the best interest in mind, will have better representation on the Council. The second key aspect of SB 99 is its focus on the PUCO nomination process. The bill mandates that at least one of the five commissioners be selected from a list submitted by the Ohio Consumers Council to the Governor. This provision not only ensures that the consumer's best interests are at the forefront of the Commission's decisions but also amplifies their voice in the process.

We know that the Former Chair of the PUCO, Sam Randazzo, had business transactions with FirstEnergy. This legislation would expressly prohibit someone who receives any amount of money from a PUCO-regulated entity, let alone a \$4.3 million payment from a PUCO-regulated entity, from serving as a PUCO chairperson. This provision is a strict rule that will ensure the integrity of the Commission. It is imperative that individuals on the Commission have not been

bought by utilities in any sense and that they remain loyal to the millions of Ohio customers they represent.

I urge the committee to schedule proponent testimony for SB 99. This will not only allow for a thorough discussion of the bill's provisions but also provide an opportunity for the public to voice their support and concerns. By doing so, we can ensure that Ohio can move on from the stain of the House Bill 6 Scandal and towards a more transparent and accountable Public Utilities Commission.

