SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 103
OF THE 136TH OHIO GENERAL ASSEMBLY
TESTIMONY OF BRIAN WEISKER, PRESIDENT, DUKE ENERGY NATURAL GAS BUSINESS
BEFORE THE OHIO SENATE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE

October 1, 2025

Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee:

My name is Brian Weisker, and I am President of Duke Energy's natural gas business. I am responsible for the company's regulated natural gas operations in Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Carolinas. I also lead our natural gas commercial operations, which include supply, wholesale marketing, transportation and pipeline services, field customer service, sales and delivery, and business development. In Ohio, we provide safe and reliable natural gas service to roughly 490,000 customers, continuing the nearly two-hundred-year legacy of our predecessor companies. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Substitute Senate Bill 103 (S.B. 103).

Duke Energy applauds Ohio's passage of laws over the past decade to protect critical infrastructure, to guarantee that customers retain access to natural gas service, and to promote the state's economic competitiveness. While an earlier version of S.B. 103 proposed a new and different regulatory model, the substitute bill before you will merely apply an existing construct to natural gas utility regulation. In my testimony to follow, I will describe how natural gas factors into local, state, and national issues, including economic development opportunities. I will recap the benefits of the modernized regulatory paradigm enacted under House Bill 15 (H.B. 15), and I will explain why the ratemaking policies of that transformative legislation should be similarly applied to the natural gas industry. I will conclude by briefly explaining the need for the state to adopt policy that appropriately addresses the unique challenges and needs of large load natural gas customers.

I. Natural gas plays an essential role in our daily lives, our economy, and our shared national policy priorities.

Energy such as that derived from natural gas is the single common input required for every good produced and service delivered, and in Ohio we are fortunate to have an abundant supply of this valuable resource. Natural gas heats our homes and water. We use it for cooking and powering appliances such as clothes dryers and fireplaces. It fuels electric power plants; it is used as a feed stock in manufacturing processes; and it provides reduced

emission solutions for public transportation and waste removal fleets. In 2023 alone, natural gas accounted for approximately 36 percent of our nation's total primary energy consumption, and that number is trending upward.[1] We further know of the nexus between American energy dominance, our economic prosperity, and our national security. These imperatives require a modernized regulatory paradigm such as that contained within S.B. 103 to promote and facilitate necessary and timely investments in critical natural gas delivery infrastructure.

II. H.B. 15 modernized Ohio's electric utility regulatory model, providing much needed common-sense reforms that should be applied to the natural gas utility industry.

Earlier this year, through the hard work and by multiple near-unanimous votes of this General Assembly, and by signature of Governor DeWine, Ohio enacted innovative regulatory reforms under H.B. 15. As the state's only combination natural gas and electric utility, we participated in that process, during which time many of you heard testimony on H.B. 15 and Senate Bill 2 by my colleague, Amy Spiller, President of Duke Energy Ohio. In her remarks, she described the many benefits that multi-year rate plans provide customers, regulators, and utilities by using forecasts and annual true ups of investments, revenues, and expenses. To reiterate, under Ohio's highly regarded 3-year rate plans:

- Customers have improved transparency in the setting of base utility rates, as well as better rate predictability and flattening of rate increases. They are also able to realize in a timelier fashion incremental cost savings that may be achieved throughout the multi-year plan.
- Regulators can more effectively and efficiently prepare for and administer utility rate cases.
- Utilities can better plan and time necessary capital investments in their infrastructure. In so doing, capital may be acquired under more favorable conditions, further accruing to the benefit of customers who bear associated costs.

Multi-year rate plans are undeniably a marked improvement over the historical approach to setting base electric utility rates. The same will hold true for the natural gas industry.

[1] U.S. Energy Information Administration. 2025. *Natural Gas Explained, Use of Natural Gas*. https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/natural-gas/use-of-natural-gas.php.

The natural gas and electric utility industries share many similarities. These include variables used to determine base utility rates, such as property valuation, asset depreciation, and number of customers. The rate design principle of cost causation is also common across industries. Further underpinning the argument for parity is the reality that most natural gas customers in Ohio are also electric customers. The logic and reasoning that the state relied upon when it enacted a new regulatory paradigm for electric utilities are undeniably sound. S.B. 103 will sensibly extend the benefits of that policy to natural gas customers, regulators, and utilities, and help to bring economic opportunities into the state.

III. Large load customers present unique challenges in the effects they have on infrastructure and smaller load customers, necessitating specific policies to address them.

Natural gas utilities supply some of the most diverse, robust, and growing industries in Ohio, including high-tech defense manufacturing, data centers, and pharmaceuticals. These types of operations rely upon and utilize natural gas infrastructure in unique ways, including the need for capacity and commodity volumes far greater than residential, commercial, and smaller industrial customers. State policy regulating the treatment of large load customers should reflect recognition of these differences. It should support energy modernization and rapid economic growth, uphold cost causation principles, and demonstrate consideration for how other customers are affected. The large load customer provisions in S.B. 103 fairly and reasonably balance the intersecting interests of existing and potential new customers while providing utilities with the means to respond to development opportunities at the speed of business.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, S.B. 103 presents an opportunity for Ohio to address natural gas regulatory challenges while embracing economic opportunities. It does so by building upon an existing and broadly supported modernization of utility law crafted and enacted by this body. S.B. 103 will help natural gas utilities to effectively and efficiently plan, engineer, construct, operate, maintain, and safeguard the critical infrastructure necessary for our continued provision of safe and reliable service. Duke Energy appreciates the work thus far of the bill sponsor and this committee, and we welcome the opportunity for continued engagement on this important legislation. We urge its swift passage.