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Opposition Testimony for Ohio Senate Bill 320
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At 22 years old, I never thought I could be more fearful for my future. The lack of action in the State of Ohio to create a sustainable job industry and to protect our future is appalling. Renewable jobs are the future and critical for the success of our state and our country. Recently, the United States has started to increase the amount of renewables used to generate energy. According to Watson & Hudson (2015) the United States expanded the number of wind farms by 28% and the number of solar farms by 83% between 2011 and 2012. While the United States as a whole appears to be transitioning to more renewable energy sources, Ohio is not a state that is supporting the transition to renewable energy. According to the U.S Energy Information Administration (EIA) during 2014, 67% of Ohio's electricity came from coal, 18% from natural gas, 12% from nuclear, and less than 3% from renewals (March 31, 2015). Comparatively, 39% of the United States' electricity production came from coal and 7% from renewables, showing that Ohio falls below the national average for renewable energy use (EIA March 19, 2015). To show how well other states are utilizing renewable resources, in 2013 Colorado had more than 17% of their electricity generated from renewables (EIA August 2014). Ohio significantly underperforms states such as Colorado in its production of renewable energy. The job market for renewables is on the rise while jobs in the coal industry have been steadily declining. If Ohio wants to create sustainable jobs for its citizens, it must invest in job opportunities that are sustainable themselves. Ohio must not continue to invest and support the coal market when there is a clear national decline in the market. Ohio must shift away from fossil fuels and begin to develop more renewable energy sources. Keeping energy local, renewable, and clean is important for our society, environment, and economy. Ending fossil fuel use and transitioning to renewable energy is one of the tasks that must be achieved to protect our futures and our environment. Renewable energy offers a clean, healthy, and promising future, in which Ohio must recognize.

Many problems stem from our heavy reliance on fossil fuels. Fossil fuels emit many toxic pollutants into our atmosphere that put humans and the environment both at risk. The pollutants released when coal and oil are burned include sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and mercury to name a few (USEPA 2014). Sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides can both cause serious respiratory problems that can affect human health (USEPA 2010). In regard to the environment, these two pollutants contribute to ocean acidification and also contribute to biodiversity loss as these pollutants harm vegetation, aquatic, and terrestrial ecosystems (USEPA 2010). Mercury is also a harmful pollutant that can cause liver, brain, and kidney damage in humans (USEPA 2010). Mercury is often deposited into rivers, lakes, and oceans where it then contaminates aquatic life, giving humans and other wildlife exposure to the pollutant when that aquatic life is consumed (USEPA 2010).

In addition to these many problems caused by the burning of fossil fuels, the most prevalent problem is climate change. There are many side effects of climate change, including increased global temperature, droughts, forest fires, ocean acidification, retreating glaciers, melting ice sheets, rising sea levels, and permafrost melt, to name a few. We have a moral obligation to protect this environment for the next generation of our own species. However, what gives us the right to devastate the homes of the millions of other species that call Earth home too?

Earth is not ours to destroy, in fact by destroying the Earth we are essentially destroying ourselves. At this moment in time each of you carry a heavy weight. If you decide to pass SB 320 to continue the freeze on renewable energy standards, you will be largely responsible for the destruction of planet that is caused by the burning of fossil fuel. Additionally, you will not be supporting a sustainable job market, nor will you support a sustainable energy future for your own children. Because of the many catastrophic risks, events, and problems associated with fossil fuels, it is necessary that you allow Ohio to shift away from its coal and oil dependency and instead focus on the potential of renewable energy sources. My future lies in your hands. Please consider the outcome of your actions and the impact it will have on all the lives of my generation and the generations to come.

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