



# OHIO CITIZEN ACTION EDUCATION FUND

Before the Ohio Senate  
Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
Senator Troy Balderson, Chair  
Tuesday, November 22, 2016

Hearing on S.B. 320

Testimony of Melissa English, Executive Director  
Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund

Chairman Balderson, Vice Chair Jones and members of the Committee:  
Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund is the research and education affiliate of Ohio Citizen Action, which offers its own testimony here today. Like our sister organization, we have worked on energy and consumer campaigns for more than four decades. Also like them, we testify today against S.B. 320, on the grounds that it swims against the tide of inevitable change, unnecessarily hobbles our economy and fails to serve the public interest.

I assume that everyone in this room understands that coal and natural gas are finite resources. One day they will be completely gone. One day, Ohio and everyone else must prioritize energy efficiency and using renewable energy. I submit that this situation is rather like a toothache. Like a pain that comes and goes at first, our need to transition to cleaner, renewable energy can be

ignored for a while with little consequence. Taking action early to fill a cavity- or invest in our energy future- will cost us a little pain, a little time, a little money, but it's hardly a priority. As time passes however and the pain increases, the cost of our inaction becomes clearer and greater.

There's the cost to our economy, for one thing. An ambitious energy policy, including mandatory benchmarks for utility investment, could spur growth in Ohio's clean energy sector, adding to the 100,000 jobs we already have. Recently, nine companies employing more than 25,000 Ohioans urged reinstatement of mandatory renewable energy and energy efficiency standards, because lower electricity bills boost their bottom lines. Keeping them happy and employing our residents seems like a natural choice for a safe a prosperous future. Our window of opportunity to capture those clean energy jobs closes a little more every day we delay reinstating the standards and other states rush in to fill the void.

There's the cost to our health to consider as well. We burn more coal right now than anyone, except Texas and Indiana, and that takes a serious toll on us. When we and other groups succeeded in taking 22 of Ohio's oldest and dirtiest coal boilers offline in 2014, we saw a reduction of 819,195,781 pounds of air and water pollution *annually*. If we were to allow the old standards to snap back into place, we could in just one year avoid 2,230 asthma attacks, 120 trips to the ER, 230 heart attacks and more than 16,000 sick days from work and school.

We can't forget the cost to Ohio's consumers. By the utility companies'

own reports, consumers saved \$1.03 billion on electric bills before the freeze.

With so many of Ohio's families still reeling from the recession, we must do all we can to lower their bills and lighten their burden.

In closing, I urge you to embrace the inevitable transition to clean energy sooner rather than later. The longer we wait, the greater the cost to our economy, our consumers and our health. Let this bill die in committee. Let the standards we froze return and let Ohio resume its place as a clean energy leader.