

Opponent Testimony: SB 33
Ohio House Public Utilities Committee
January 29th, 2020

Jacie Jones

Chairman Callender, Vice Chair Wilkin, Ranking Member Smith and members of the House Public Utilities Committee,

My name is Jacie Jones, and I am writing to represent the Cleveland Hub of the Sunrise Movement. Sunrise is a youth-led movement to stop climate change and create millions of new jobs in the process. As a society, particularly for young people, we face a frightening reality that the stable climate we depend on will crumble in our lifetime unless we take action. Environmental devastation is happening right now in our communities. One long standing and necessary way for everyday Ohio citizens like me to stand up for the Earth and my future is protesting injustice.

As young people, Ohioans, and climate justice leaders, we are concerned with the threat that Senate Bill 33 presents to our right to peacefully protest. As guaranteed by the first amendment, people have the right to peacefully assemble and protest. If SB 33 were to pass, free speech and peaceful protesting would suffer a chilling effect seen in other states where similar bills have been implemented. SB 33 proponents claim that the bill is simply a protection of private property rights, but ignore the fact that trespassing and vandalism are already covered under existing Ohio state laws.

SB 33 proposes a hyper criminalization of such issues far beyond what is constitutionally just punishment. To charge an individual with a felony is incongruent to a minor crime such as trespass or petty vandalism. This penalty is unconstitutional, and it would be a waste of time and our limited funds to pass a bill that would only be challenged in court and overturned, as a similar bill was in South Dakota. Additionally, any organization who is viewed as providing support to an individual can be charged with up to a \$100,000 fine. This exorbitant fine would put a large burden on movements and organizations like Sunrise.

Within SB 33, the term “Critical infrastructure” is an expansive and encompassing term that includes everything from telephone poles to fracking sites. SB 33 could set a dangerous precedent with implications that reach much farther than environmental activism concerns.

Senate Bill 33 is not simply a bill to protect private property rights. SB 33 poses a threat to our constitutional rights. The Sunrise Movement is made up of ordinary young people who are scared about what the climate crisis means for the people and places we love. At a time of mass inequality and climate catastrophe, we must protect the right to nonviolent protest. The Cleveland Sunrise hub urges you to vote against Senate Bill 33.