

Chairman Jason Stephens
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
The Ohio House of Representatives

May 26, 2021

Dear Chairman Stephens and others committee members,

I am writing in opposition to HB 282, which would protect the sale of radioactive brine from oil and gas operations for use as a deicer on Ohio roadways.

Brine is attractive as a deicer because it's so cheap. Oil and gas producers sell it for pennies a gallon, or even give it away, glad to have its disposal off their hands.

But using brine products on roads and streets exposes children and adults, as well as pets and wildlife, to a toxic substance that contains high levels of radioactive radium, according to Ohio Department of Natural Resources tests.

Application of oil-and-gas-well brine repeatedly along the same roads causes a build-up of radioactivity in the sediment and soil and creates an ecological dead zone, according to Avner Vengosh, a Duke University geochemist quoted in a recent investigative report on brine

I live in Bay Village, which prides itself on the number of elementary and middle school students who ride their bikes to school every day. Think about the possible exposure of these children to toxic residue along city streets if Bay Village is to use a de-icer product such as AquaSalina.

Brine deicers are promoted by the oil and gas industry as being a "beneficial use" because they transform a waste product into a commodity that can be sold. I hope members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee perform a basic calculation to see whether the risk of toxic exposure is really worth the dollars saved.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

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Marco Kaltfen, an nuclear-forensics scientist at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, said in a recent investigative report on products such as the AquaSalina deicer: “Essentially what you are doing is taking an underground radioactive reservoir and bringing it to the surface where it can interact with people and the environment.”