

Chair Stephens, Vice Chair Stewart, ranking member Weinstein and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

I am the Rev Joan VanBecelaere, Executive Direction of Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio, an organization that offers social justice education and organization for Unitarian Universalist congregations throughout Ohio. I want to speak in opposition to HB 282.

I am not a scientist. I'm a minister. There are others today who will better explain the science behind the dangers of selling toxic radioactive oil and gas well waste as a de-icer in our hardware stores, Walmart and grocery stores. They will tell you about how Radium 226 and 228 found in the waste far exceed standard levels and that the material dissolves easily in water and can move into our water supply. And they will note that removing the oil and gas elements from the waste does nothing to reduce the Radium. And they will note how the U.S. EPA and the National Academy of Sciences say that Radium 226 and 228 are known human carcinogens. But others will go into all of that.

Instead, I want to talk about the ethics of placing brine plant workers and store workers and snow removal workers at risk of bone, liver and breast cancer through repeated exposure to the toxic waste product. And how Radium 226 and 228 decay and turn into Radon gas that causes lung cancer.

Are the workers in the brine processing plant wearing appropriate masks and protective covering? Has anyone asked about their rates of illness and cancers? Will those who load and drive delivery trucks know that they are handling radioactive materials? Will the clerks at Walmart and the shelf stockers at home Depot have protection from handling cases of undiluted radioactive waste?

I want to talk about the reality that turning this waste brine into a still radioactive de-icer and selling it for use on sidewalks, playgrounds, church parking lots and other public spaces puts all of us at risk, including our children and even our pets. The slush, still dripping with the toxic waste, will be dragged into our homes on the boots of kids and the paws of our pets.

I want to talk about the nightmare of our children playing out in the snow on a winters day and making radioactive snow angels that could cut short their young lives.

Yes, there are some current regulated and limited uses of this waste brine on highways in extreme weather. But there is a reason that the Ohio Dept of Natural Resources regulates this carefully and requires approval and reporting of who spreads it and when and tracks how much is spread where. ODNR knows it is dangerous and not be used where ordinary people, children and pets can easily encounter it.

HB 282 would remove ODNR oversight and regulation of the transport and use of this toxic waste. The bill would not even require any labels on the bottles of the waste warning about its radioactive nature, let alone restrict its use.

If HB 282 is passed, and this toxic waste moves into our stores and is used on our sidewalks, parking lots and driveways, we will be knowingly placing workers, ordinary people, children and all of us on this living world at risk.

Why would we want to risk our lives and those of so many others of our neighbors and friends for the sake of one company's profit? And there is only one company, Duck Creek Energy, producing the waste de-icing material in Ohio at this time. Why would we risk public health and safety, the environment, and the safety of our children -- even if we tell them not to make radioactive snow angels near the driveway or on the playground? Why risk so much of this larger living world for the sake of such limited and individual profit?

This is not right. And we all know it. In many of our religious traditions, we are called to be our brothers' and sisters' keepers. And as Jesus preached so eloquently in the book of Matthew, chapt 25, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

Please stop this bill. We are all in this together and we need your protection from this toxic threat. Thank you.