



## Representative Casey Weinstein

*The Ohio House of Representatives*

House Public Utilities Committee

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### **HB 429: Comprehensive Energy Policy focused on Jobs and Justice**

Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the House Public Utilities Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning on House Bill 429—The Energy Jobs & Justice Act—with my joint sponsor, Representative Brent.

The Energy Jobs & Justice Act is a comprehensive energy policy rooted in economic development, equity, and accountability. After decades of energy policy that has largely favored utility companies and fossil fuels, Ohio needs forward-looking solutions that are good for our economy, our communities, the jobs of today and tomorrow, and our health. The Energy Jobs & Justice Act fills that need and creates a blueprint for how Ohio can move forward. **This legislation will launch Ohio's largest economic development initiative in recent history, prioritizing investments in clean energy jobs and environmental justice programs across the state.**

We're quickly approaching the two-year anniversary of when Ohioans learned about the corruption behind House Bill 6, and while this legislation is focused on moving Ohio forward, we also have to rectify the damage that the HB 6 scandal did to Ohio's energy efficiency, the marketplace for renewable energy, and the public's trust in the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

The Energy Jobs & Justice act has three main pillars, but **at its core, this bill is about jobs**. We all know the energy transition is here. Across the country, jobs are being created in the clean energy and energy efficiency industry. The [US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) places both Wind Turbine Service Technicians and Solar Installers in the top 5 fastest growing occupations in the country between 2020 and 2030. In our state, we already have over 100,000 Ohioans [working in the clean energy sector](#), an industry whose standards were gutted by HB 6. Many large employers like Intel have strong renewable energy purchasing goals. This legislation removes market barriers on renewable energy development that will attract companies with

strong sustainability and climate goals, and ensure they purchase their power in Ohio, as opposed to renewable energy credits from other Midwestern states.

Ohio's energy policy needs to ensure we're ahead of the game, not left behind, and it's time to make clean energy work for ALL Ohioans. We have the right to live in a healthy and sustainable environment, but, unfortunately, we know that is not the reality for everyone in our state. Hotter days caused by climate change degrade air quality, and poor air quality disproportionately impacts low income communities. Bad air days exacerbate asthma, which afflicts nearly 1 in 12 Ohio children according to the American Lung Association's 2019 State of the Air report.

Ohio ranks 7th in the country in Carbon Dioxide emissions, according to the [US Energy Information Administration](#). Reducing those emissions is crucial in ensuring the health of all Ohioans, particularly our most vulnerable residents. The provisions on carbon emissions reductions in the Act will **ensure all electricity sold to Ohio utility customers and all electricity generated in Ohio is 100% carbon-free by 2050** with interim year benchmarks to ensure Ohio stays on track with this goal.

To get there, this Act provides an opportunity for Ohio to take huge steps toward renewable energy by leveling the playing field for renewables statewide, by removing overly-burdensome red-tape on siting new wind farms in Ohio, enabling community solar, and making permanent the local tax mechanism that ensures new renewable project revenue flows to school districts and county governments. The *Carbon Emissions Reduction* pillar of this bill also includes provisions to identify opportunities to eliminate energy waste and reinstate energy efficiency standards, saving consumers money in the process.

And finally, in order to change the dynamics and ensure Ohio's electricity markets are working for all Ohioans, this bill contains fixes to make the energy and electricity sphere more transparent and hold utilities accountable to ratepayers. HB 429 strengthens the ability for state regulators to audit and investigate any utility engaging in possible malfeasance, removes undue utility influence over the Ohio Public Utilities Commission, and restores Ohio's Consumers Counsel's ability to handle complaints. This bill also directs the PUCO to issue *performance based* rules, which will allow the public to better be able to hold public utilities accountable, while also incentivizing the utilities to improve their performance.

Ohioans can't afford any more piecemeal approaches or to continue to come up against utility-sponsored roadblocks. **It is time to build a comprehensive energy policy around equitable solutions that are good for our economy, our communities, and our health.**

I would like to hand the microphone to Representative Brent take it from here and then we will be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.