

Chair Shaffer, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

I am the Rev Joan VanBecelaere, Executive Director of Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio, an organization that offers social justice education and resources for Unitarian Universalist congregations throughout Ohio. I want to speak in opposition to SB 171.

I am not a scientist. I'm a minister. But I do listen to scientists. And there are some who will testify today to explain the science that confirms 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 Aqua Salina far exceed acceptable levels and they will describe how the waste de-icer brine easily dissolves water and could flow into our water supply through storm drains and runoff. They will note that removing the oil 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 that breakdown into Radon Gas that causes lung cancer. I will let these other learned witnesses present this data.

Instead, I want to talk about the ethics of risk. The ethical problems created by placing brine plant workers and store workers and snow removal workers at risk of bone, liver and breast cancer through repeated exposure to the radium in the toxic waste product. And the risk that rises from the breakdown of radium into radon gas that causes lung cancer.

I want to know if the workers in the brine processing plant are wearing appropriate masks and protective covering? I know they wear dosimeters, but that doesn't protect them from breathing in dried de-icer dust containing radium nor does it protect from breathing in radon gas. A dosimeter to read exposure is a start but the radium laden dust and radon is airborne which would require some form of industrial respirator and possibly supplied air. Even then, they would be a risk. Radon is odorless and tasteless and they would have no idea they are breathing it in. So all who work with this material should be in Tyvek with hoods, face shields, gloves and boots because of dust.

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 adequate 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.

Winter slush, still dripping with the toxic de-icer fluid, will be dragged into our homes on the boots of kids and the paws of our pets. It will contaminate our surface water supplies with run-off off as the ice melts and it will contaminate the dirt around sidewalks, playgrounds, and streets around our homes.

I want to raise up 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 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 unprotected people, children and pets can easily encounter it.

SB 171 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 SB 171 is passed and this toxic waste is sold in 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.

No one outside of one processing plant has given any kind of consent to being exposed to this radioactive substance. This is not right.

And why would we want to risk our lives and those of our neighbors and friends for the sake of one company's profit? There is only one company, Duck Creek Energy, producing the waste de-icing material in Ohio at this time. Why should 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 one individual company and one man's personal profit?

There are too many questions about this unregulated exposure. Too many unknowns about the long lasting effects. Too many risks involved for too many of us in spreading this substance on our sidewalks and driveways.

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. 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.