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Written Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 10
Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
February 9, 2021
Jason Smith, Interim Advocacy Manager, AARP Ohio

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on behalf of AARP. As a nonpartisan, social mission organization representing individuals aged 50-plus with a national membership of 37 million and approximately 1.5 million members in Ohio, AARP is deeply concerned about the anti-consumer policies enacted into law under House Bill 6 in the 133rd General Assembly.

Signing the House Bill 6 nuclear bailout bill into law was always bad for Ohio consumers, but the impact of COVID-19 has only made the choices many Ohioans have to make between paying for food, medicine, housing, and utilities even more dire. Even before COVID-19, utilities compromised a high proportion of older citizens' household budgets, and many Ohio citizens over 65 found it a challenge to pay their existing bills. Any policy that raises utility bills, particularly during a pandemic, should take into consideration the impact on these very vulnerable Ohioans.

We commend Senator Romanchuk for introducing this bill to repeal decoupling and the excessive earnings test benefitting FirstEnergy that was included in the last state budget. While we would prefer all of the anti-consumer policies in House Bill 6 be repealed, Senate Bill 10 is a good first step. We also urge repeal of the nuclear plant bailouts, as well as subsidies for OVEC coal plants, including the one being subsidized by Ohio rate-payers that is located in Indiana.

Finally, while the recent voluntary agreement by FirstEnergy to reject \$100 million in additional 2021 revenue from House Bill 6 decoupling provisions is good news for consumers, the law will remain in place unless repealed and continues to be a stain on the Ohio Revised Code. Therefore, we urge the committee to resist any attempts to remove the repeal of House Bill 6 decoupling provisions from Senate Bill 10 as a result of the emergency motion FirstEnergy is filing with the Public Utilities Commission to zero out their decoupling rider.

We favorably ask for passage of Senate Bill 10 as an important first step in repealing the anti-consumer policies enacted by House Bill 6. Thank you for this opportunity to share our testimony supporting Senate Bill 10, please feel free to contact AARP Ohio if you wish to further discuss our concerns and position.

Real Possibilities