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Written Proponent Testimony on House Bill 128
Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
March 23, 2021
Jason Smith, Associate State Director, 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.

While we support the provisions of House Bill 128 that repeal decoupling, the excessive earnings test, and the utility tax on consumers to fund the unnecessary nuclear bailouts, it does not go quite far enough in addressing all of the anti-consumer provisions contained in House Bill 6. We also urge the repeal of subsidies granted to Ohio Valley Electric Corporation (OVEC) coal plants, including the one being subsidized by Ohio rate-payers that is located in Indiana. While we believe House Bill 128 is an important first step, the General Assembly won't be fully successful in reversing the anti-consumer, pro-bailout policies of House Bill 6 without repealing this outrageous tax benefitting OVEC.

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2021 revenue from House Bill 6 decoupling provisions is good news for consumers, the law will remain in place unless repealed and continues to be a stain on the Ohio Revised Code.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 filed with the Public Utilities Commission to zero out their decoupling rider.

We favorably ask for passage of House Bill 128 as an important first step in repealing the anti-consumer policies enacted by House Bill 6. Should the committee decide against including the

Real Possibilities

repeal of OVEC subsidies in House Bill 128, we greatly anticipate hearing the committee's plans for addressing this critical issue and working with you to benefit Ohio consumers 50-plus. Thank you for this opportunity to share our testimony supporting House Bill 128, please feel free to contact AARP Ohio if you wish to further discuss our concerns and position.