

HOUSE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE, HONORABLE WILLIAM SEITZ, CHAIRMAN
OPPONENT TESTIMONY, HOUSE BILL 178

MINISTER G. L. EVANS, CONCERNED PASTORS ASSOCIATION OF STARK COUNTY
TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2017

Chairman Seitz and members of the House Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am Pastor G. L. Evans II with Concerned Pastors Association of Stark County. We are a group of over 25 pastors that have joined together to proactively address challenges and work to improve the lives of families in our congregation and our community.

We take the time to discuss issues that affect our community, and we feel that House Bill 178 is a significant threat to families and communities we are working to help. Many in our community are struggling financially, and are already making tough choices about how to make ends meet. We are working to find ways to make necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, water, heat and electricity more accessible to the families we serve. If House Bill 178 passes it will raise the cost of electricity and make it less accessible to many in our community.

In the Eastern and where I live in the Western part of Stark County (Massillon), any increase in rates will do unnecessary harm to my community. While a five percent increase may seem small to some, it could be a devastating amount for those who are already barely affording to keep the lights on and put food on the table, not to mention keeping what little food they have cold in the refrigerator. Every family in Ohio should have access to low cost electricity, and should not have to pay more to increase a big company's bottom line.

I understand a group of ministers from Cleveland was here last week testifying in support of this legislation. And, I understand that they described how they have benefitted from generous contributions from FirstEnergy, and even said they felt those benefits outweigh the increase in electric rates. We respectfully offer a different perspective. While I'm sure those contributions are greatly appreciated by those who receive them, there are many in FirstEnergy's territory that will never see benefits from those contributions. And even if they did, FirstEnergy's contributions to worthwhile causes do not justify thousands of Ohio families having to pay more than they should for the basic necessity of electricity.

I respectfully request that this committee protect the many Ohio families, including mine, that are already struggling to pay their monthly electric bills by voting no on this legislation.