



## **Cleveland Clergy Coalition**

Dean of Ministries - Rev. Dr. E.T. Caviness

United Pastors in Mission - President Bishop Larry Macon

Baptist Ministers Conference - President Rev. Dr. Leonard T. King

Baptist Pastors Council - President Rev. Dr. Herbert Gator

Mt. Pleasant Ministerial Alliance - President Rev. Dr. Larry L. Harris

Cleveland Clergy Alliance - President Rev. Dr. Lorenzo Norris

East Cleveland Concerned Pastors - President Pastor Anthony Smalls

Coordinator - Rev. Aaron Phillips of Sure House Ministries

### **Pastor Aaron Phillips Testimony**

#### **Ohio Senate Hearing – S.B. 128**

**June 8, 2017**

Chairman Beagle and members of the Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee, my name is Pastor Aaron Phillips, and I thank you for having me here today to express my strong support for Senate Bill 128 – the Zero-Emissions Nuclear Resource legislation sponsored by Senators John Ekland and Frank LaRose.

As the senior pastor of Sure House Baptist Church in Cleveland and a member of the Cleveland Clergy Coalition (CCC), I am deeply concerned about environmental and economic issues impacting my congregation, my community and the state as a whole. Ohio's nuclear power plants deliver important clean air benefits, keep electric rates low, and help drive the statewide economy. The Zero Emissions Nuclear Resource Program (ZEN) is in the best interest of the families I serve and I encourage you to support its approval and implementation.

CCC is an innovative organization uniting faith institutions, community organizations and leaders, labor unions and policy groups across Cuyahoga County. We are a coalition of several clergy organizations in Cleveland committed to the development of everyday people, to their political formation and resulting capacity to build power for themselves. We believe that lasting social change occurs from the bottom-up, in church basements and union halls, at community centers and on the doorsteps of our neighborhoods.

From an environmental standpoint, Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station and Perry Nuclear Power Plant together prevent 4,000 tons of nitrogen oxides and 3,000 tons of sulfur dioxide emissions each year. The American Lung Association recently ranked the greater Cleveland and greater Cincinnati areas as being among the worst the nation for serious health threats from these

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pollutants, which can cause breathing difficulty, cardiovascular harm, reproductive damage, worsening of asthma symptoms and lung cancer. As you may be aware, these risks disproportionately impact our most vulnerable populations – children, the elderly, low income communities and people of color often face higher exposure to pollutants and greater effects from the pollution.

In my role, I am also keenly aware of the struggle many families face to make ends meet each month. Ohio's nuclear plants help keep electricity prices low, saving consumers \$177 million in electricity bills each year. This is important not only to those families, but also to organizations like mine that operate on a very efficient budget. We manage each expense very carefully to ensure that we provide a safe and welcoming place for our congregation to worship each week; keeping the lights on is a huge part of that commitment.

Davis-Besse and Perry are among the largest employers in Ottawa and Lake Counties, contributing more than \$23 million in state and local taxes that support our schools and vital public services such as police and fire departments. Plant employees are well-paid, and their earning power, property tax payments and income taxes make our communities a better place for us all.

Finally, I'd like to point out that not only do these plants deliver immense environmental and economic benefits, but they are a good neighbor as well. Since 2007, employees at Davis-Besse and Perry have contributed approximately \$1.8 million to local United Way chapters and the state's Harvest for Hunger campaign. As a company, FirstEnergy and its foundation have contributed more than \$58 million to Ohio causes over the same timeframe. Of that, nearly a million is donated annually to Cuyahoga County organizations that directly benefit our congregations, such as the Black Professionals Association, United Negro College Fund and United Black Fund.

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Beyond the dollars the company provides, FirstEnergy has teamed with the Cleveland Clergy Coalition to select candidates from urban locations for its Power Systems Institute, a two-year program that combines classroom learning and hands-on training to prepare for electric utility careers. The company also has provided free energy efficiency assessments, repairs and upgrades for more than 100 churches and residential homes in our Greater Cleveland neighborhoods.

Ohio's nuclear power plants are integral to the economic and social fabric of our state, generating affordable, reliable electricity for residents and businesses, providing thousands of highly-skilled and well-compensated jobs, contributing significant tax revenues and delivering important clean air benefits. I urge you to support families in my community and across the state by supporting ZEN legislation.

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