Testimony to Ohio Senate on HB 6 6-18-2019

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Chair Wilson, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Williams and members of the committee,

My name is Patricia Marida. I have been following nuclear issues in Ohio since 1981. I have done volunteer work for a number of organizations, but today I am speaking for myself in opposition to HB 6.

Gregory Jazcko, former chair of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission has just written a book entitled “Confessions of a Rogue Nuclear Regulator.” In this book he says, “Nuclear power is no longer a viable strategy for dealing with climate change, nor is it a competitive source of power. It is hazardous, expensive and unreliable. The real choice now is between saving the planet or saving the dying nuclear industry. I vote for the planet.”

Jazcko is speaking of saving the planet both from climate catastrophe and from a nuclear catastrophe. These are strong words from a man with the most intimate knowledge of nuclear power and the industry, a man who initially favored nuclear power but was swayed by the reality of the costs, both monetarily and in how the industry is affecting public health in the present time. Not to mention the issues of aging, embrittled reactors. And the tiny little unsolved problem of radioactive nuclear waste.

I am confused as to how HB 6 is named the Ohio Clean Air Program, when it scuttles renewable energy and efficiency, the energy sources with the lowest environmental and air pollution footprints, and bails out coal and nuclear, the dirtiest and most dangerous sources. But then I am also confused by the continuing changes to this bill. These changes have made the bill fundamentally different than the original. Making major changes to Ohio’s energy policy, and then changing the parameters from one day to the next, is hardly a way to make responsible energy policy. Particularly when the stakes are very high for industry and for the public. The final effects of whatever version is going to be voted on are not likely to be understood by me nor by most of Ohio’s legislators.

In 2018, FirstEnergy spent $3 million on "lobbying." Its top seven officers, who bankrupted the company, were collectively paid more than $20 million. This is more than 10% of the proposed bailout! So 10% of the gift that HB 6 would give to this bankrupt company, would be going to pay for these bloated salaries. This, on the backs of Ohio’s poorest citizens.

A report from the PJM Interconnection finds that retiring current nuclear plants as scheduled in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Ohio and adding new natural gas and renewables would save $1.6 billion and 4.3 million tons of carbon, assuming 11.9 GW of coal also retires across the PJM region.

Lastly, I will note that FERC, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, is now going back to the drawing board, looking at how they can regulate a competitive market when states are picking favorites to subsidize. A monkey wrench is being thrown into the competitive market. And it is having chilling effects on industries. “Free” market is touted when it does what I want and is good for me, but when it is not, I will make a legal “adjustment”.

HB 6 a partisan bill. It is a Republican-led tax on every citizen of the state. I hope that no more Democrats will drink the Kool-Aid and vote for this. And I thank those Republicans who are standing their ground and voted and will vote against it.

Thank you to the members of the committee for your time and attention.