

April 26, 2023
House Public Utilities Committee
Proponent Testimony on House Bill 79

Chair Stein, Vice Chair Robb Blasdel, and Ranking Member Weinstein – I am Chris Hollon, AES Ohio's Senior Counsel for Regulatory Law, thank you for allowing me to present proponent testimony in favor of HB 79. AES Ohio appreciates the bill's joint sponsors, Representatives Seitz and Sweeney, for their work on this bipartisan legislation.

AES Ohio serves as the electric distribution utility for 527,000 customers in West Central Ohio. We are part of The AES Corporation, a US-based, global power company. As part of AES, we enjoy the benefits of being both local and global. Our Dayton roots mean that we are completely integrated and invested in the Miami Valley community. Our international reach strengthens our ability to develop and deliver new solutions for our customers here in Ohio. Every day we work to accelerate the future of energy, together.

AES Ohio supports energy efficiency programs. The state's electric distribution utilities are uniquely positioned to deliver cost-effective programs to customers at scale and to work with local stakeholders, including contractors, distributors, and trade groups to achieve the benefits of these programs.

When AES Ohio ended its previous, mandated energy efficiency programs, many of our customers were disappointed to lose access to such cost-saving measures. Those programs helped customers reduce their energy usage – providing them with both immediate and lasting long-term cost savings – and further aided all utility customers by reducing system load and delaying or avoiding future utility costs. When Representatives Seitz and Sweeney presented the idea of restarting similar programs, AES Ohio was motivated to participate in this process.

HB 79 would allow an electric distribution utility to apply to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio for approval of a portfolio of programs for energy efficiency and peak demand reduction. The bill describes available programs, including:

- Limited behavioral energy savings,
- At least one low-income program,
- Smart technology measures, and
- Energy savings from installed devices at the request of the customer.

Although previous Ohio energy efficiency programs relied on mandates to meet savings goals, HB 79 incentivizes both customers and utilities to be more efficient.

Finally, this bill ensures that residential customers who do not wish to participate in energy efficiency programs are provided with two opt-out opportunities while requiring mercantile customers to opt-in.

This committee will likely hear about newly released federal dollars for energy efficiency through the Inflation Reduction Act. While commendable, AES Ohio believes the programs envisioned by HB 79 can complement this new federal program.

Chair Stein, Vice Chair Robb-Blasdel, and Ranking Member Weinstein – thank you again for providing this opportunity for AES Ohio to submit proponent testimony on HB 79.