



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

Using Ohio's Natural Gas to Turbocharge the Future

Interested Party Testimony
Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee
Ohio Senate Bill 103

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As Prepared for Delivery

Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding **Ohio Senate Bill 103**.

My name is Greg R. Lawson, I am the research fellow at **The Buckeye Institute**, an independent research and educational institution—a think tank—whose mission is to advance free-market public policy in the states.

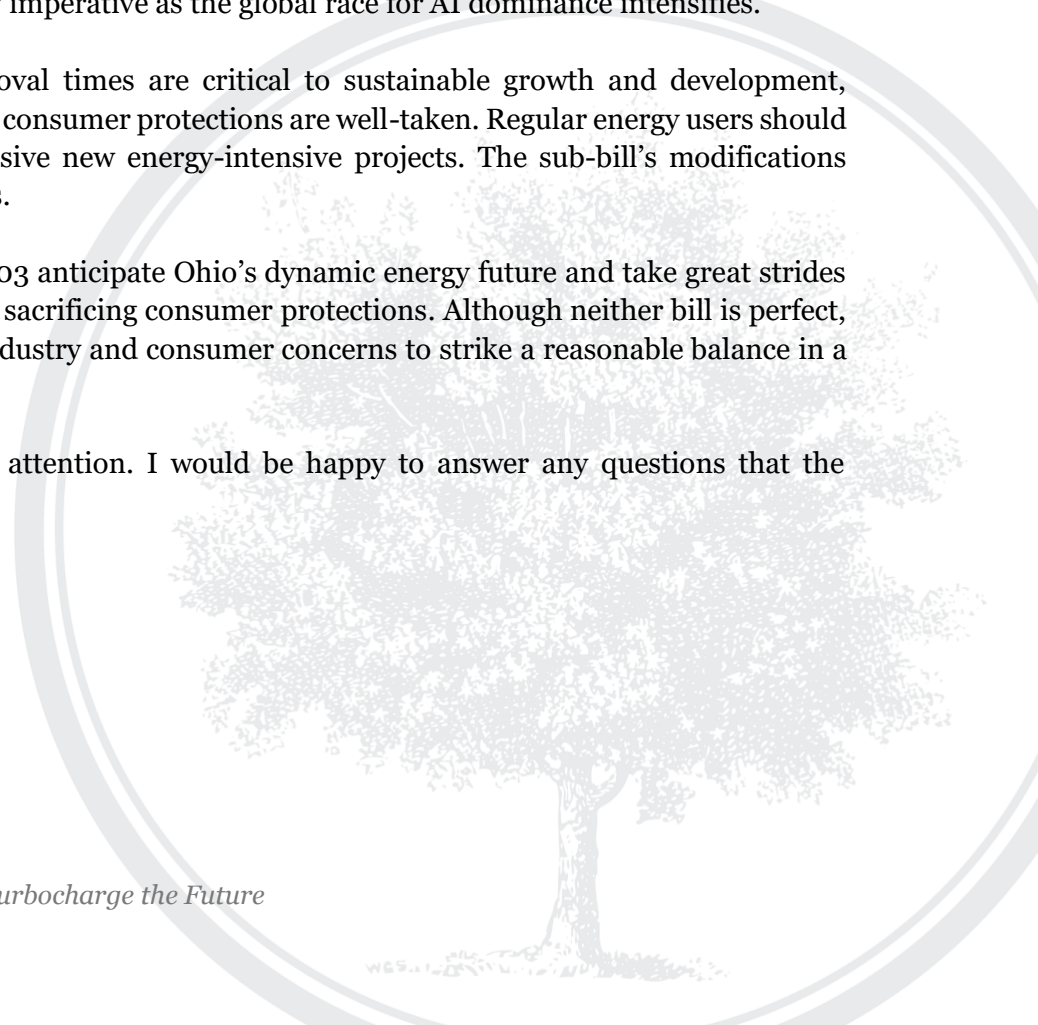
Senate Bill 103 takes meaningful steps to strike the critical balance of turbocharging Ohio's technological future, national security imperatives, and consumer protection amid complex public utilities regulation. At its core, the bill reforms Ohio's rigid regulatory procedures for natural gas project approvals through the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO). Delays in approval undermine economic and technological growth by delaying utilities and on-site energy hook-ups for significant energy consumers like data centers and advanced manufacturing companies. Natural gas and electric utilities are not the same, but Senate Bill 103 adopts a framework similar to the one enacted in **House Bill 15** several weeks ago but well-tailored to meet the needs of the gas industry and its customers.

Critically, for example, Senate Bill 103 allows large-load consumers to enter mutually beneficial agreements with utilities, which will help keep Ohio competitive and spur economic development by attracting new technology and industrial investment. As artificial intelligence (AI) and data processing advance, construction for energy-intensive data centers has surged across the country. Ohio has been a national leader in such projects so far but ensuring that the state's energy infrastructure can continue meeting sector demands for reliable, affordable power remains an economic and national security imperative as the global race for AI dominance intensifies.

Although energy project approval times are critical to sustainable growth and development, testimonial concerns regarding consumer protections are well-taken. Regular energy users should not have to pay costs for massive new energy-intensive projects. The sub-bill's modifications wisely protect those consumers.

House Bill 15 and Senate Bill 103 anticipate Ohio's dynamic energy future and take great strides to meet rising demand without sacrificing consumer protections. Although neither bill is perfect, they pay careful attention to industry and consumer concerns to strike a reasonable balance in a complex but critical field.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee might have.



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