



Ohio Environmental Council [Action Fund]

December, 20, 2022

The Honorable Richard Michael DeWine
Governor of Ohio
Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 34215-6117

Dear Governor DeWine:

On behalf of our members, supporters, and those we serve, we want to first thank you and your administration for being a champion for Ohio's public lands and for water quality improvements. We write to you to draw your attention to problematic provisions that the Legislature abruptly amended and then passed HB 201 (Increase consumer's natural gas costs) this month, in less than 48 hours. HB 201 allows increased cost collection by natural gas utilities. **We humbly ask that you veto this legislation.** This bill is unnecessary and puts Ohioans at risk of having to pay more for their natural gas.

This legislation features a last minute amendment in a Senate committee that expands current law and allows natural gas utilities to charge customers for additional infrastructure upgrades. It also allows expansion tied to economic development projects, including on sites not yet attached to any project.

HB 201 will raise Ohioans' rates to pay for infrastructure at private sites, with overly broad language that does not provide proper oversight or timeline for approval from the Public Utilities Commission (PUCO). The authorized rate increase in this bill comes on the heels of the PUCO's approval of a massive rate hike for Columbia Gas earlier this year. The PUCO-approved fixed charge in that case will raise customer's monthly costs, not tied to consumption, to as much as \$58 a month by 2027.

The state of Ohio cannot have equitable energy and environmental policy without proper oversight of energy companies. Last-minute legislation that offers financial incentives to the natural gas industry at the expense of hardworking Ohioans struggling to pay their energy bills is not a good way to govern.

If Ohio's leaders would like to explore changes to economic development infrastructure incentives, they should do so through an open and transparent process, in a standalone bill. This continuing trend of last-minute amendments to bills that are halfway through the legislative process flies in the face of our democratic system, and does not allow Ohioans to meaningfully participate in the development of legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of a veto on HB 201 and for your service to the state of Ohio.

Carol Kauffman
President
OEC Action Fund