

December 18, 2020

Governor Mike DeWine
Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 South High St.
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor DeWine:

As the Governor's office starts consideration of candidates to fill the vacant Commissioner seat at the Public Utilities Commission, we hope you will consider our thoughts on the appointment. The Commission is at a particularly critical moment, where the decisions it makes will have a significant long-term impact on the direction of Ohio's energy future. Given this scenario, the undersigned organizations urge you to limit consideration of candidates to those who have no connection to the utilities the Commission regulates, and who support clean energy.

Foremost, we believe that given the broad ways FirstEnergy has tried to influence both the legislative and Commission decision-making processes, the new Commissioner should not have any ties to the public utilities. You've already indicated your desire to appoint someone in whom the public will have confidence, and the only way to achieve this is to appoint someone truly independent. There is clearly a stress in the system between the profit motives of the utilities and the need to protect consumers. This is a natural conflict, and the reason that we regulate monopolies. The problems that have come to light in recent months highlight the need for the next Commissioner to start this job with no undue influence from the utilities. Moreover, we are at a time where the pandemic has hit many Ohioans very hard, and we need to do everything we can to help lower bills and deliver the cleanest energy possible in order to improve air quality and, consequently, Ohioans' health.

Independence from the utilities and clean energy should go hand in hand, and we urge you to choose a candidate who has a forward-looking approach to energy efficiency and renewable energy. As Ohioans, we understand that coal, nuclear and natural gas will play a significant role providing baseload electricity for many years. That said, our state needs to take better advantage of energy efficiency and renewable energy moving forward. Energy efficiency replaces generation, and benefits customers by helping them reduce their usage and save money on their bills. This should be our highest priority because it's both good for consumers and helps reduce pollution. To achieve this win-win scenario, we need to encourage development of all forms of renewable energy. Like energy efficiency, renewable energy not only reduces pollution, it benefits consumers as well. Unlike coal, natural gas and nuclear plants, once renewables are built, the fuel to power them is free and they have minimal operating costs.

Ohio needs a new Commissioner who will both protect consumers and position Ohio to take advantage of clean energy's cost, economic development, and health advantages. We believe that our approach here is a reasonable one, and that several candidates who have applied for the position fit these parameters. We urge you to apply these criteria in making your choice. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective on the selection process, and look forward to working with you moving forward.



Alliance For Climate Education



Black Environmental Leaders



Citizens Utility Board of Ohio



Clean Fuels Ohio



Environmental Law & Policy Center



Evangelical Environmental Network



Green Energy Ohio



Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance



Moms Clean Air Force



Ohio Citizen Action



Ohio Consumers Power Alliance



Ohio Environmental Council



Solar United Neighbors



The Nature Conservancy Ohio

CC:

Laurel Dawson, Chief of Staff to Governor DeWine
Ryan Burgess, Director of Cabinet Affairs for Governor DeWine
PUCO Nominating Council