



OEC [Action Fund]

**Opponent Testimony - Ohio House Bill 349 (Barhorst, Jones)
Nolan Rutschilling, Managing Director of Energy Policy
April 30, 2024**

Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, my name is Nolan Rutschilling and I am the Managing Director of Energy Policy for the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) Action Fund. Our organization works to secure healthy air, land and water for all who call Ohio home. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written opponent testimony for Ohio House Bill 349.

To put it simply: in a time of [high profits](#) for oil and gas companies and increasing concerns around polluting natural gas infrastructure, HB 349 takes Ohio taxpayer dollars and allocates incentives for natural gas pipelines and development. Particularly troubling is the reduction of natural gas companies' property taxable value. By altering the valuation formula for natural gas company property, property taxes are cut by up to 75%. This is egregious at a time when Ohioans across the state, particularly seniors and low income homeowners, struggle to keep up with their rising property taxes. Natural Gas companies need to pay their fair share of taxes to Ohio communities, and don't need more funding for infrastructure that can damage our water and land, as recently seen in [Athens County](#) and [Columbiana County](#).

Ohioans are being hit with rising costs in both the regulatory and legislative space. This bill increase comes at a time when utilities like [Dominion Energy](#) and [Columbia Gas](#) continue to seek increases in monthly fixed costs, which remain steady no matter how much gas customers use. This legislation is part of a pattern of corporate giveaways in the same vein as House Bill 201, which increased the ability for natural gas utilities to charge Ohioans for pipeline to economic development sites, at the expense of ratepayers and the environment.

Enough is enough: Ohioans deserve better than more fossil fuel bailouts. The OEC Action Fund urges a no vote on HB 349, both in Committee and on the House floor.

Sincerely,

Nolan Rutschilling
Managing Director of Energy Policy
Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund