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SB250-OPPONENT

I am very concerned that the Ohio Senate is considering SB250 when there are so many other more urgent problems it should be focused on. In particular we have a common threat from climate change that is already wreaking havoc on American lives. Last week the federal government put out a report written by 13 federal agencies stating that Climate Change is having grave economic consequences for America. The New York Times explained the findings this way:

"The report puts the most precise price tags to date on the cost to the United States economy of projected climate impacts: \$141 billion from heat-related deaths, \$118 billion from sea level rise and \$32 billion from infrastructure damage by the end of the century, among others.

The findings come a month after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a group of top scientists convened by the United Nations, issued its most alarming and specific report to date about the severe economic and humanitarian crises expected to hit the world by 2040." <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/23/climate/us-climate-report.html>.

In addition to these alarming findings, the report singled out the Midwest farmer as being the most at risk for the negative effects of climate change. This is a problem worth the time and attention of the Ohio Senate. For example, the Ohio Senate could be finding ways to promote a clean energy future for Ohio. Ohio was once positioned to be a leader in wind energy in America. Did you know that the cheapest energy in America in 2017 was wind energy? Why aren't the representatives of the people working hard to make that a reality in Ohio?

The expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure like fracking wells, compressor stations, or pipelines to transport fossil fuels is the opposite of what we as a nation, and as a state should be doing to avert the grave physical, economic and psychological harm of a warming planet. In addition to the global damage of expanding our dependence on fossil fuels, communities where this infrastructure is built are at risk from illness caused by air pollution, damage to water supplies, spills of toxic material, and earthquakes from waste disposal in injection wells. Knowing this, citizens sometimes organize protests of these proposed sites in order to call attention to the serious global and local harms they cause.

SB250 appears to be legislation aimed at such citizens who exercise their right of free speech. This bill not only threatens protestors with excessive fines and prison sentences, it also threatens organizations who support their protests. Anyone who has organized a protest knows that you cannot control the actions of every single participant. Indeed the possibility is always present that the target of the protest may hire individuals to be a part of the protest and initiate violent actions to discredit the protest. SB 250 calls for fines to any organization that in any way helps a protest in which damage or trespass occurs to "critical infrastructure". These exorbitant fines could bankrupt citizen led environmental groups. Is that the goal of this legislation? Why do we need this bill when we already have laws against trespassing and damaging property?

SB250 is an unnecessary bill which is not written to benefit Ohio citizens but to discourage them from voicing their concerns about our willful neglect of our common home. It will only embolden the fossil fuel industry to stay the course toward irreversible climate disruption.