



Friends of Buckingham (FoB)

PO Box 61 Buckingham VA 23921

434-226-0282

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Dear Virginia state legislators,

On behalf of Friends of Buckingham and our members in Virginia, we're writing to express our serious concerns with, and opposition to the Virginia Clean Economy Act (SB 851/ HB1526). Although we appreciate the considerable efforts that have already gone into crafting this comprehensive piece of legislation, we believe several key components need to be strengthened in order to gain our support, including:

1. **Ratepayer protections:** As currently written, ratepayers have to pay utilities for the costs associated with implementing programs to meet Virginia's new renewables programs, even if the program does not end up delivering results. But on the other hand, if the utility is unable to accomplish the new renewable energy goals the bill requires them to pay a "deficiency payment" as a form of penalty. The bill, however, also allows the utilities to pass this penalty on to ratepayers. Both the State Corporation Commission (SCC) and the Virginia Attorney General have stated this bill is bad for consumers and bills are likely to go up with little accountability.
2. **Fossil fuel moratorium:** The bill does not actually place a moratorium on new fossil fuel plants, pipelines, or compressor stations. Although some language deals with fossil fuel plant retirements, the bill itself provides loopholes for allowing new fracked gas plants and for keeping existing plants open past 2045 by using new technologies (such as carbon sequestration).
3. **Lack of a just transition:** Although the bill has some language addressing hiring local workers and "historically disadvantaged" communities, the bill does not have specific provisions to emphasize how the renewable energy programs will benefit them. The language in bill only requires that they are "identified" and "prioritized," but does not have explicit criteria.
4. **Nuclear Carve-Out:** The bill allows nuclear energy to be a large part of the renewables program way in to the future. However nuclear energy is neither clean, safe, nor a renewable. We worry this technology will prevent truly clean renewables like solar and wind from actually taking off in Virginia.
5. **Low Energy-Efficiency Standards:** While the bill has some provisions for new energy efficiency standards, the standards are too weak. Virginia was recently ranked as having one of worst energy efficiency programs therefore Virginia should ask for stronger energy efficiency standards.
6. **Too Late a Timeline:** Climate scientists in 2018 said we had about 10 to 15 years to drastically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, so we are worried that a 2045 deadline is too far into the future to deal with the urgency of the climate crisis.

The science is clear on the changing climate therefore any half measures to solve it will result in irreversible repercussions. In order to tackle this issue you must pass legislation that puts Virginians first, prioritizes investments in truly clean renewables, stops the fossil-fuel build out immediately, and calls for

ambitious goals that reflect the climate crisis's urgency. Unfortunately, without these dire amendments, the Clean Economy Act isn't the solution Virginia needs to combat climate change.

Sincerely,

Heidi Dhivya Berthoud

Secretary Friends of Buckingham

info@friendsofbuckinghamva.org

<http://www.friendsofbuckinghamva.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ProtectBuckingham>