

AES Ohio
Three-Year Rate Plan Testimony – Chris Kershner
Local Public Hearing, July 9, 2026 (Case No. 25-0958-EL-AIR)

Good afternoon,

I am Chris Kershner, President and CEO of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce. As the largest non-profit business organization in West Central Ohio, our chamber advocates for more than 2,200 member businesses, with 200,000 employees, across a 14-county footprint. We represent the Dayton region's diverse economy, from major corporations to the small, minority-owned, women-owned, and veteran-friendly businesses that anchor our communities. The Chamber's mission is to foster a thriving, competitive, and predictable climate that encourages capital investment and job creation. Central to that mission is ensuring that our regional infrastructure is stable, accessible and affordable for our business energy consumers. Today, I'm here to highlight AES Ohio's essential role in advancing economic development across the Dayton Region and the need for continued investment and customer protections through the company's Three-Year Rate Plan.

The relationship between the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce and AES Ohio is not transactional; it is a foundational, decades-long alliance built on a shared commitment to the economic vitality of West Central Ohio. AES Ohio has been a highly active, dedicated and founding member of our Chamber in 1907. Throughout this extended tenure, AES Ohio has consistently demonstrated a deep investment in our community, not just as a regulated utility provider, but as a proactive partner in civic leadership, economic development, and workforce transformation.

The Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce supports approval of AES Ohio's Three-Year Rate Plan. Affordability is a national priority, and businesses need confidence in reliable power to operate, grow, and compete. One of this region's competitive advantages is the confidence in our infrastructure. Businesses need energy certainty, accessibility and affordability. AES Ohio provides all three. AES Ohio has been a steady energy partner, supporting our community through some of its most challenging times. Our member businesses depend on a modern, resilient electric grid, and secure infrastructure is essential to attracting advanced manufacturing and logistics investment to the Miami Valley. Outages can cost local businesses millions in lost productivity, so Ohio must remain a competitive place to do business. The Three-Year Rate Plan provides a transparent, phased approach to rate adjustments below CPI, helping protect businesses' bottom lines as they manage inflationary pressures.

Through joint leadership on the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy steering committee, the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce and AES Ohio have helped secure regional infrastructure upgrades and bring the advanced AES Smart Operations Center to MacGregor Park. This digital command hub successfully retained 55 high-value positions, protected \$5.87 million in payroll, and created 31 new technology engineering and data science roles with \$2.82 million in new payroll. By partnering with regional development organization, this framework supports major regional growth, providing the stable power base necessary to help secure historic local investments like Joby Aviation's \$500 million manufacturing development and its 2,000 projected new jobs.

Additionally, our partnership strengthens the local talent pipeline. AES Ohio embeds its team into the Chamber's professional programs, graduating 13 alumni from Leadership Dayton and 7 corporate leaders from the Empower executive cohort to tackle systemic community challenges. On the economic front, the utility supports business inclusion through the Chamber's Opportunity Partnership program, intentionally routing corporate supply chain procurement to local minority-owned and female-led enterprises. This localized business model directly amplifies the regional impact of AES Ohio's \$2 million 2025 community investments across the Miami Valley.

The Dayton Region needs a strong electric utility partner that can work with public and private organizations to support economic growth through affordable, reliable, and resilient energy. AES Ohio is making necessary investments in its distribution system while limiting the impact on customer bills.

For more than 115 years, AES Ohio has been a valued supporter of the Miami Valley, a trusted civic partner, an active Chamber leader, and a company deeply invested in Dayton's people and economy. As the Commission reviews the data, testimony, and staff recommendations for this rate plan, the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce respectfully considers the importance of supporting grid reliability while protecting the affordability and economic competitiveness our business community depends on.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce views and your consideration of our region's business voice.

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