

## Viterna Testimony HB 554

Hello! My name is Karen Viterna. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I made the trip to Columbus today from Vermilion to share with you how important your vote today on the RPS freeze is to me, my family, and fellow citizens of Ohio. Its impact ripples into our lives.

My grandparents came to Ohio in the early 1900's. They and my father as well as my brothers primarily have lived and worked in Lorain County in what used to be dominant and well-paying industries such as mining, gasoline and steel. My brothers, the last of that generation have been laid off from the steel industry in the last few years and despite promises the steel industry has never revived. Today, my immediate family consists of my husband and me, along with five children. Two of our children have moved out of state for employment and educational purposes.

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest son, John is employed by First Solar which used to be headquartered here in Ohio, but is now headquartered in Arizona. Many of his co-workers at the Perrysburg, Ohio site recently lost their jobs. As you have no doubt heard, First Solar's COO indicated the company was going to seriously consider moving from Ohio. Continuing Ohio's RPS freeze paves First Solar's way out of Ohio along with it an estimated \$12,000,000 of Ohio's economy. John is the major breadwinner of the family and he, his wife and baby stand to lose its financial foundation if this RPS freeze continues any longer. And our family is one of many Ohio families who stand to become unemployed in Ohio based on the outcome of this bill.

In addition loss of employment, my husband and I made a nearly \$70,000 investment in solar panels that power our home. That was a major investment for us. We selected panels manufactured in the USA and they were bought from an Ohio company named YellowLite. At many times (primarily throughout in the summer) we send excess power to the grid where it powers some of our neighbors' homes. Our electric company credits us less than a third of the amount that they charge our neighbors' for our excess power. That's a pretty good profit for our electric company given they made zero investment for it. When we installed solar energy, we believed the Ohio RPS was a commitment by the State to our investment. Over the next 20 years, Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECs) were a significant expectation to contribute to the return on this investment. When the State of Ohio made the RPS impotent, SREC values have plummeted. If the SRECs still retained the value they had 5 years ago, we'd earn almost \$5,000 a year for those 16 SRECs we generate annually. Instead they are worth about 6% of that or about \$300. For comparison, today in Washington DC those same SRECs would be worth about \$500 each or almost \$8,000 a year.

Ohio's RPS was instituted in 2008 it could have helped Ohio be a leader in the rapidly growing industry of renewable energy and to finally begin to address its problematic clean air issues compared to most other states. In these years since the freeze of the RPS, renewable has continued to grow and Ohio is now behind instead of leading. The RPS freeze has negatively impacted families such as ours and stands to further Ohio's economy. I to urge you to vote to lift that freeze on Ohio's RPS.