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David Zak
Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 49
Senate Finance Subcommittee on General Government and Agency Review
Chairman Kris Jordan
Tuesday, May 23, 2017

Chairman Jordan, Vice Chair O'Brien, and Members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on General Government and Agency Review, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 49. My name is David Zak and I am President & CEO of the Seneca Industrial and Economic Development Corporation (SIEDC). In that role, I lead initiatives that make the community a great place to live and run a business and thereby drive economic, downtown, and community development for Tiffin and Seneca County.

Chambers of commerce and economic development organizations are at the forefront of advocating for the growth of our communities, and in today's climate, we recognize that energy is an increasingly important issue for our member businesses.

Today I join my economic development colleagues across Northwest Ohio in supporting accelerated business activity by removing restrictions on wind energy that have blocked new wind farm projects in Seneca County and other communities. We must instead establish reasonable wind farm siting rules to encourage investment, provide tax benefits and support local communities.

In my county, we look forward to the future development of a planned 200 megawatt wind facility by Republic Wind. This would provide energy to 57,000 homes and represent a large investment in our tax base. It would create hundreds of jobs during construction and infuse millions of dollars into the county. During operations, the community will benefit from sustained tax revenue for local governments and schools, plus benefit from decades of procurement, jobs, and investment.

Without reasonable changes to wind setback requirements, our community is at risk of losing these millions in private investment and hundreds of jobs. That jeopardizes our economic well-being, and unnecessarily so.

Ohio is a leader in wind-related manufacturing, and it only makes sense that we should also be a leader in producing energy using this clean, renewable resource.

What's more, large employers are increasingly adopting clean energy sourcing policies and therefore want to locate in areas where clean power is available locally. Providing clean power to these companies is a very significant economic opportunity. This includes both fast-growing tech firms such as Amazon, which has a large demand for wind energy to power data centers, and traditional Fortune 500 employers are also buying or building clean energy for their facilities. For example:

- Toledo-based Owens Corning recently signed the largest wind power purchase agreement by an industrial company in the world—though it must source wind energy from Texas.
- Honda in Marysville and Whirlpool in Findlay are just a couple examples of industrial facilities that have added wind turbines to supply a portion of their power needs; and
- Campbell's in Napoleon (Henry County) and Dannon in Auglaize County have built or are pursuing solar.

With well over half of Fortune 100 companies having adopted a clean energy goal, carbon emissions reduction goal, or both, we believe Republic Wind will be a sound investment that will strengthen and diversify our local economy, providing both jobs and investment both during construction and well into the future.

We therefore request that the Subcommittee act in a timely manner to include legislative language in HB 49 that restores reasonable wind setback standards by returning Ohio law to the pre-2014 setback requirement of 1.1 turbine lengths from the property line.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on today's legislation.

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