

Jeffrey Snyder
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 appear before you today as an interested party to House Bill 49.

My name is Jeffrey T. Snyder and I am the Superintendent of Lincolnview Local Schools in Van Wert County in Northwest Ohio and I urge you to support HB 49 to allow for more investment in our community and county. The bill is fundamentally about economic development, attracting investment to our state, and job-creation in Van Wert County, and Northwest Ohio.

Lincolnview Local Schools serves around 900 students from grades K through 12 on the eastern side of Van Wert County with a district that spans 120 square miles. We are proud of our educational offerings and traditions, and we have seen our open-enrollment numbers increase the past 10 years. This means that students not geographically in our district want to go to our school. We have leveraged funding from the Blue Creek Wind Farm and with the "Straight a Grant" from the State of Ohio to equip every single one of our students with a computer device, either a laptop or tablet. The new technology is revolutionizing our K-12 curriculum with more of an inquiry-based focus, specifically in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). We have already implemented two brand new courses in the high school, which are "Pre-engineering" and "Bio-medical" for our students. This new revenue stream from the investment in wind energy has allowed our district to expand in areas we did not think were possible, with the potential of sustainability as well.

We want to build on this growth and success and keep enhancing education for our students and our community. So because of our new added revenue, and being fiscally conservative, our Lincolnview Local School district has decided to give back to our community in a way we never thought possible. We will be embarking on a new \$5 million dollar "Community Center" breaking ground this Fall that will feature a 35,000 square facility that our community will be able to use throughout the day, with the hopes someday our community can use it 24/7. This new facility will enhance the following:

- Classroom Education for (STEM) and all other academic programs
- Community meetings – 4-H, lions club, school awards banquet, Booster events (reverse raffle), athletic booster meetings,
- Homecoming dances
- Prom or post prom
- PTO carnival night
- Movie night – by the PTO
- Evacuation site in case K-12 building needs evacuated due to a threat in the building

- Evacuation site for spectators and athletes who are outside and inclement weather approaches
- Dare graduation
- 21st century after school program
- Latchkey program (a before and after school program for working parents)
- Class reunions, graduation parties, job fairs, college fairs, etc.
- Site for local elections
- Wellness center
- Walking track
- Three basketball/volleyball courts
- Soccer court
- Baseball/Softball hitting cages
- Pole Vault pit & high jump area
- Potential areas for “Pickle Ball” and “Tennis”
- Yoga, meditation, Zumba, & exercise classes
- Athletic Training Room/Wellness Room

We have also refinanced our bonds due to the added revenue, which will allow us to save the district on interest payments and pay off our building loans earlier than expected, thus saving our district thousands of dollars. We will continue to look at lowering our tax levy requirements for our community, however with the current uncertainty in state funding for public education, especially rural school districts, we will continually to operate in a fiscally cautious manner unless another new funding stream emerges and for us that could be changes legislatively in regards to wind energy. The Blue Creek Wind Farm, operated by Avangrid Renewables, is in its fourth year of at least twenty years of PILOT payments to our district. It has been a huge success, with approximately \$410,000 per year in funding going to our district. Avangrid wants to build another wind farm in our school district, and a different developer, Apex Clean Energy, has plans for yet another project in our district, however both projects are at a standstill with current law. With the HB 49 these potential new projects could become a reality we hope.

In Northwest Ohio we boast that we are the “Wind Capital of Ohio,” but unfortunately Ohio has a policy barrier - wind turbine setbacks which could be easily be resolved at no cost to the state or our community. House Bill 49 addresses this policy barrier to wind farm development in Ohio, enabling communities that want wind farms the opportunity to have them.

We have seen the positive contributions of the wind farms in our communities: new money for farmers/land owners and local government, a new revenue stream for our school district, a company like Avangrid Renewables who is willing to give donations to our school and students, and the opportunity to make a difference with renewable energy in the state of Ohio. That’s why the change to the setback requirements was perplexing. This current regulation goes too far, and takes away the property rights of those who want to see wind development on their land and they visually can see the difference it has made to their own local school and the county for which they live in.

There is growing interest from private companies, especially high technology data companies, to purchase renewable energy and to further develop in state. These companies take their corporate

sustainability plans extremely seriously and are demanding renewable energy, procured from projects built in the state in which they do business. As renewable energy prices have fallen, these deals have become more attractive financially and of course, with no fuel costs, the power price is guaranteed not to change for the duration of the contract—often twenty years - an enormous benefit to businesses that like long term predictability.

It seems to me that returning to reasonable setbacks can create a lot of wins for everyone:

1. New funding source for our school, along with the other benefits of a new wind farm investment – particularly new local jobs and new local revenue for farmers.
2. A new source of clean energy for another new investment in Ohio, maybe a data center.

So in closing please support House Bill 49 to allow counties, like ours, to make the choice to try to achieve all these potential benefits. If not we are really concerned that in the future these same companies who want to invest in Northwest Ohio and in Ohio in general will leave and invest in another state taking economic development opportunities with them.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify and I would be pleased to take any questions.