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Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 49
Senate Finance Subcommittee on General Government and Agency Review
Chairman Kris Jordan
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Good morning 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 Matt Gilroy and I am Executive Director of the Fulton County Economic Development Corporation. Our mission is to advance industrial and commercial development by cultivating a favorable business climate, expanding economic opportunities, and training Northwest Ohio's workforce to compete in today's global economy.

In recent years, Northwest Ohio has received significant wind energy investment, and we hold great potential for more growth. Fulton County plays a leading role in training the workforce for careers in this industry, which is projected to grow over the long term.

Chamber and economic development leaders as well as school and local government officials have seen wind energy projects deliver significant economic benefits to businesses, schools, communities, and the economy of this state.

That is why I encourage you restore reasonable wind turbine siting standards that will allow wind development to move forward once again.

Setback standards so greatly increased in 2014 that the new minimum distance of 1,125 feet from the property line disqualifies most or all land area for wind turbine placement, destroying the financial viability of new wind facilities. By analogy, imagine a shopping mall or industrial park in which 90 to 100 percent of the land area was prohibited for construction by a setback rule. What developer could construct and lease a financially viable property under those circumstances? Consequently, what developer would invest there? None, of course—resulting in lost economic activity and lower property values for the underlying parcel.

This is the situation Ohio law has created for wind energy: a de facto moratorium on wind projects and new investment.

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Economic development officials like me are supposed to compete with other states for development, but how can we do our jobs when this draconian setback standard ties our hands? As other states expand deployment of clean and efficient energy, Ohio's competitive disadvantage grows.

Delay in addressing the wind setback would further undermine Ohio investment. Corporate procurement of clean energy continues to grow, doubling from 2013 to 2014 and doubling again from 2014 to 2015. In 2015, for the first time, Fortune 500 companies and other non-utility customers contracted for more than half of the wind power in America. A growing number of companies today, when considering a site for new or expanded facilities, consider whether it will enable them to fulfill their clean energy sourcing policies: they want access to clean power or the ability to develop it. In today's highly competitive business climate, Ohio can't afford to hurt its standing in the eyes of company leaders who decide where to invest. The Buckeye State can be an attractive, but we are losing opportunities because of this shortcoming.

You have a chance to reverse this trend. As seen in other states, by removing barriers to development Ohio would spur innovation, diversify its energy supply, create jobs, and attract billions in investment.

For these reasons, I strongly recommend that the Subcommittee include legislative language in HB 49 to restore reasonable wind setback standards that return Ohio law to the pre-2014 setback requirement of 1.1 turbine lengths from the property line.

Thank you for allowing me to share my economic development experience and for considering my testimony.

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