

# *Paulding County Economic Development, Inc.*

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## **Interested Party Testimony of Jerry Zielke on H. B. No. 49 Director of Paulding County Economic Development, Inc. and President of Northwest Ohio Regional Economic Development Senate Finance Subcommittee on General Government and Agency Review Chairman Kris Jordan Tuesday, May 23, 2017**

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 Jerry Zielke and I am Director of Paulding County Economic Development, Inc. and President of Northwest Ohio Regional Economic Development. As the chief economic development officer for Paulding county, it's my job to create conditions that attract business, create a skilled workforce, and grow the tax base.

I'm here today to address an economic development topic of great importance to my county and region: rolling back excessive regulation in state law that currently blocks new wind farm development. In 2014, the distance for wind turbine setbacks was greatly increased from the common industry standard of 1.1 times the height, which has been successful for Ohio's three operational wind farms, to a minimum 1,125 feet. That's such a long distance, it's only a little less than the height of the Empire State Building and it's more than double the distance needed for the size of the wind turbines currently in use in Paulding County.

The problem: this distance is so restrictive that it disqualifies most or all land area for wind turbine placement, destroying the financial viability of new wind facilities and resulting in a de facto moratorium on wind farm development and investment in the county.

Paulding County has seen tremendous positive impacts from the development of wind farms projects built by Iberdrola Renewables and EDP Renewables North American LLC in our county. These wind farms have provided a much needed funding resources for local rural school districts, Vantage Career Center, local townships, local libraries, and other county governmental agencies. Our local Paulding Area Foundation has a number of turbines located on its farm operation. The wind farm turbine revenue is being used to expand educational scholarship programs for high school student to attend college. We have seen a number of landowners donate the income from the wind turbine for new buildings at our fair grounds and other local community projects.

To enable Ohio to take full advantage of this fast-growing sector that has already delivered more than \$1.4 billion worth of investments, 9,000 jobs, and \$4.6 million in payments to landowners and local governments, excessive regulation needs to be rolled back and Ohio must create consistent and reasonable rules to make us a good place for project developers to do business.

This investment in renewable energy over the past year has been featured in Site Selection magazine, spotlighting our community as growing area for innovation in Northwest Ohio.

It will come as no surprise that if we don't attract investment, other states will. Let's work together to help the Buckeye state attract economic activity that grows the tax base and adds jobs.

A broad range of local leaders support this position: chambers of commerce, economic development officials, school leaders, and county elected officials. And they are not just from communities that produce wind power, but also those who use it, such as central Ohio communities that are home to new Amazon data centers.

For these reasons, I request the Subcommittee 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.

Elected officials frequently say "government shouldn't pick winners and loser" when it comes to the marketplace, but the overly-restrictive wind setback rule definitely violates that ideal by making wind development a loser. I know you agree with these lean-government, free market-supporting principles, so I look forward to working with you to fix this immediately, in the weeks before June 30.

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

Sincerely,

*Jerry L Zielke*

Jerry L Zielke, Director PCED

President Northwest Ohio Regional Economic Development

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**Our Mission Statement**

**To assist Business, Industry and Local Government in developing job opportunities and prosperity in Paulding County.**