

House Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy Generation
Chair Dick Stein and Chair Michael O'Brien
Opponent Testimony on House Bill 6
Testimony of NAME
Position, Company/Organization

April 23, 2019

Chair Stein, Chair O'Brien, and Members of the Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy Generation, my name is Luke Sulfridge, Ohio Director of Solar United Neighbors. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today as an opponent to Ohio House Bill 6.

We are non-profit helping communities go solar together. I represent over 8,000 solar advocates in Ohio. Our program is a catalyst for about one million dollars in private solar investment a year. Our communities have helped create or sustain 60 solar jobs across the state. Solar now represents over 7,100 solar jobs in the state, and is one of the fastest growing job sectors in the country.

Meanwhile Ohio's solar industry is falling behind. Michigan and Pennsylvania now have twice the amount of solar as Ohio. One important difference is a commitment to Renewable Portfolio Standards. Michigan and Pennsylvania like many other states have been strengthening theirs, while Ohio has attacked their RPS session after session. When Ohio froze their standard, Michigan raised theirs. Even after the freeze thawed in Ohio, the in-state requirement was eliminated allowing RPS requirements to be met by buying out of state solar credits. Pennsylvania recently closed their RPS market to out of state credits and we should do the same. Governor Kasich's last budget also literally flooded the market with credits by allowing small hydro to participate without raising the percentage requirements of the standard to allow for the influx.

The RPS works. It is a market-based tool and originated in the Midwest. Twenty-nine states have a Renewable Portfolio Standard. Only Ohio and West Virginia have decided to go backwards.

By making the RPS a voluntary opt-in, Ohio will fall even further behind. The RPS is an important tool in accelerating the adoption of renewable energy. Solar systems take three times longer to pay for themselves in Ohio than in states with the strongest RPS standards. Employers well beyond the energy sector are also looking at access to clean energy when locating to a state.

Still, deploying solar in Ohio and much of the country is now cheaper than maintaining coal plants and other outdated technologies. Bailing out the nuclear plants and trying to make the coal plants cleaner does not make economic sense. Ohio will be at a competitive disadvantage, and ratepayers stuck paying more for outdated technology that is struggling to compete in the marketplace.

The “Clean Air Program” is also not the solution. The way it is constructed excludes every existing solar project in the state. It is no replacement for the RPS which continues to be a successful tool in the majority of the country. New taxes to subsidize non-competitive generators are also not advancing Ohio and stand in the way of innovation and renewable jobs for Ohioans.

I appreciate your time and consideration today, I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Luke Sulfridge

Ohio Director, Solar United Neighbors