



Paulding County Economic Development, Inc.

A 501c3 non-profit corporation

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House Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy Generation
Chairman Dick Stein and Chairman Michael O'Brien
Opponent Testimony on House Bill 6
Written Testimony of Jerry L Zielke
Director, Paulding County Economic Development, Inc.

Paulding County residents and businesses have been benefiting for a number of years from renewable energy projects. Our story begins more than twenty years ago when a group of Farm Bureau members met to discuss ways to improve net farm income on their farms after some poor crop production years. One idea was to turn corn into ethanol as a fuel additive and make feed ingredient with the byproducts. Another option was to look at wind energy, due to the fact that it was always seemed to be windy in Northwest Ohio. Funds were raised, and test towers were erected. These test towers proved that yes, it was feasible for wind energy development in Paulding County. It did not take long for development planning to begin.

Paulding County has seen over 700 million dollars of investment in three commercial wind farm projects since 2013. These projects generate approximately 275 MW of energy and over 2.47 million dollars of PILOT payment annually to local governments. What happens in Paulding County has a ripple effect across the state – the third Paulding County project was part of the deal which brought the Amazon data centers to Central Ohio. These data centers will employ over 2,000 people when complete.

The major single beneficiary of wind development and PILOT payments are Wayne Trace Local Schools in Haviland, Ohio. This school district receives nearly 1 million dollars annually. Wind projects also generate lease payments to landowners at an estimated over 3 million dollars annually. Additionally, the Paulding County Area Foundation has turbines on farmland which it owns. Last year, the Paulding County Area Foundation was able to award \$120,000 dollars in scholarships to students attending college.

Additionally, in 2018 a fourth project, the 100 MW Northwest Ohio Wind Farm project, came online in May. The power from this project was purchased by General Motors. PILOT payments will start next year. Despite stringent setback mandates that have made the development significantly more complex and burdensome to business, two more commercial wind projects are currently in development which could begin an additional 250 MW to Paulding County by 2021. The power from one of these future projects has already been purchased this spring by Microsoft Corporation.

I could continue to outline the economic benefits that Paulding County has reaped from the development of wind energy. But the fact of the matter is simple - Paulding County is home to a number of other renewable energy projects including solar and bio-energy. New sources of renewable energy generation has meant more money for local governments, more jobs for our hard-working citizens, and more revenue for our landowners.

Paulding County, one of the smallest counties in Ohio by population, has embraced renewable energy. It has given us stability in terms of our budget and jobs. It has helped preserve our rural way of life.

It would take seven factories at 100 million dollars of investment each to match the economic investment found in wind development. This would not only consume our precious farm land but would dump untold levels of pollution into our skies. Both would gravely diminish our proud agricultural heritage.

For these reasons, **I am submitting this written testimony to oppose House Bill 6.** While clean air is a goal we should all aim for, we must enact policies that will lift all communities in Ohio and not solely favor existing forms of generation. Communities like Paulding County do not have nuclear generation, but we do have wind. Any bill that addresses energy generation must include a revision to the government-imposed wind setback regulation. It is time for legislators to get out of the way of rural Ohio and let us develop what we want in our communities.

Wind development is bringing new investment and new jobs to Paulding County. By reducing the current wind setback, we can open up more of Northwest Ohio to wind development. Paulding County was lucky. All but one of our projects was approved before the 2014 setback extension which, effectively, put a moratorium on wind development in Ohio.

I am also in favor of keeping the Renewable Portfolio Standards and Energy Efficiency Resource Standards. These policies have encouraged private sector development driven by the free market. As a conservative I would rather have businesses drive development, not a program ran by politicians and government bureaucrats.

Finally, HB 6 would exclude solar development of 50 MW or less. This is troublesome as a large number of livestock farms and other businesses have invested in solar energy at their farms and businesses. **We cannot afford to leave our farmers and small business owners behind.** Those in our rural communities should not be ignored for generating zero emission energy on our land.

It should be noted that Antwerp Local Schools has a 1 MW solar array on their campus. This project saves the school district an estimated \$60,000 per year – a savings of \$85 per pupil. Under HB 6, this project would be excluded from any possible incentives.

There are over 112,000 clean energy jobs in Ohio. 18,923 of those jobs are in Northwest Ohio. While this is a great start, we need more. *We want more.* I have dedicated my career to economic development and bringing jobs to my community. I ask you to carefully consider how the policies you consider in HB 6 will affect all Ohio communities and constituencies.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. While I am unable to testify in person due to mission-critical work in Paulding County, I would be happy to discuss my testimony with you in greater detail at any time.

Sincerely,

Jerry L Zielke

Jerry L Zielke, Director Paulding County Economic Development, Inc.

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