



Testimony of Eric S. Phillips
Ohio General Assembly – House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
December 6, 2022

Chairman Stephens, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Weinstein and Members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 685. My name is Eric Phillips and I am the Economic Development Director for Marysville and Union County. I also currently serve as the Chair of the Ohio Gas Access Partnership. I also serve on the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission where I also am past chair and past board member and secretary for the One Columbus Board of Directors.

Union County is blessed to have such major corporations as Honda, Scotts, Nestle, Parker Hannifin, Continental, Select Sires, and many other small companies employing thousands of citizens in the region. Our business sector has been successful over the last decade creating over 8,100 new jobs and investing millions of dollars. Union County is also an employment center for many other counties with over 26,000 employees commuting into Union County to work each day.

Union County is the 2nd fastest growing county in Ohio averaging over 1,000 new residents each year. Last year, the County built over 700 new housing units while over the last decade the County has added over 6,800 new units.

Even with this substantial growth, we have experienced major natural gas capacity issues throughout the community. We first realized this issue in 2006 – over 16 years ago – when we received an \$18MM estimate to extend a natural gas line to a site. On a number of economic development projects, we have received both zero service letters as well as multi-million dollar extension estimate letters from natural gas distribution and

transmission companies. The lack of natural gas has slowed and in some cases prohibited our ability to grow jobs, investment, payroll, and population. This story is happening in communities all over Ohio where job growth and population are stymied by the lack of natural gas delivery. It is hard to believe that this is true in a state which has some of the largest natural gas reserves on earth.

This is why Union County, Marysville, and the Ohio Gas Access Partnership encourage the passage of HOUSE BILL 685. HOUSE BILL 685 will create "ENERGIZEOhio Zones" that will allow communities to incentivize the location and the construction of energy infrastructure. It works very similar to many of the existing tax incentive and loan programs already used by communities across Ohio, but these targeted incentives help lower the cost, whereby encouraging more natural gas infrastructure investments which will lead to catalyzing job growth and investment in communities across Ohio.

Union County wants to grow and is poised to add another 30,000 people by 2050. HOUSE BILL 685 will allow Union County and Ohio communities to realize energy infrastructure improvements that ultimately assist Ohio with its job and population growth.

Thank you again for the opportunity to lend my support to House Bill 685 this afternoon, and I would welcome any questions you may have.