

December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Washington County Commissioners  
Charles Schilling, Commission President  
223 Putnam Street  
Marietta, OH 45750

Ohio House of Representatives  
c/o Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
77 S High Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: In Person Proponent Testimony on the EnergizeOhio Bill (HB 685)

Honorable Committee Members,

As a Washington County resident my entire life I have seen and experienced the ups and downs of Economic Development. I have owned a real estate holdings company for the past 26 years. During that time I have developed residential real estate, including new homes and apartment complexes. I have been a Washington County Commissioner for the past 2 years. In my time as a Commissioner I have seen first hand where the lack of natural gas supply is a real issue.

I have been a strong supporter for years of our Southeastern Ohio Port Authority (SeOPA). Last year, within my first month in office the SeOPA purchased an AEP Muskingum River generation facility. This facility sits in Washington and Morgan counties and is positioned with in one mile of three large interstate natural gas pipelines.

I feel that I offer a unique perspective of this site, considering I sat on the Fort Frye Local School Board when the AEP plant was decommissioned in 2015. When the AEP plant shut down, our school district lost over 10% of our entire budget. Our neighboring district, Wolf Creek Local also was impacted negatively as a result of this closure.

As a Commissioner I fully support the EnergizeOhio Bill. This bill will provide resources to revitalize that site along with others in Washington County. This site,

with the needed infrastructure will not only have the potential to create jobs but will offer better sustainability for our school districts on that end of the county. There are other parts of Washington County the Energize Ohio bill will offer support. Recently, within the last 5 years in Belpre on Washington Blvd there was not enough gas pressure to support a Burger King being proposed. That was resolved by the natural gas supplier and the Burger King was built, but moving forward expansion of similar businesses will be an issue. Its not about the Burger King. Let's consider this, if we don't have enough natural gas for *dang* a Burger King, how are my communities going to complete for and attract industrial and manufacturing firms?

In Washington County, we have many large industries and chemical companies along the Ohio River. These firms employ quite a few of our residents. I've heard numerous times, in order to grow in our community these companies need access to more natural gas, without it they will be forced to grow elsewhere. I believe HB 685 can be the tool that helps these companies grow in Ohio.

Marietta Memorial Hospital, which is our largest employer (3400 employees) is starting to provide a nice footprint in the Belpre area as well. With expansions eminent, there is going to be a real need for housing. Obviously, developers seeking to provide good affordable housing will benefit from the EnergizeOhio bill as well.

Washington County is seeking a "difference maker" when talking about economic development in a multitude of ways. This is why I support HB 685 and hope the members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee do their part to convert HB 685 into law.

Respectfully Yours,

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Charles Schilling, Washington County Commission President