



Opponent Testimony of House Bill 118
Nathan Strum
GROW Licking County Community Improvement Corporation
House Public Utilities Committee
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Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in opposition to House Bill 118. My name is Nathan A. Strum, and I serve as Executive Director for GROW Licking County, a 501-c-3 public-private partnership in Licking County, Ohio that serves as the front door to our community for economic development opportunities.

Economic development organizations are at the forefront of advocating for the growth of our communities, and in today's climate, we recognize that energy is an increasingly important issue for business attraction and retention.

In recent years, portions of Ohio have experienced substantial investment and growth in the renewable energy sector, most notably in Northwest Ohio. This activity has fueled economic growth in my community, and others, as many corporations in the logistics, data, and manufacturing sectors look towards including robust renewable energy sources to offset their energy costs as well as a means to promote their own corporate culture.

In recent years, renewable energy opportunities have assisted Licking County, and many of my contemporaries, to attract substantial investments and job creation centers including Amazon, Google, & Facebook to Central Ohio. Moreover, according to the US EPA¹, of the largest corporate consumers of "Green Energy," the top 50 reads like a Who's Who of Ohio enterprises & employers include those previously noted as well as Owens Corning (No. 11), P&G (No. 13), the Boeing Company (No. 19), Lockheed Martin (No. 23), JP Morgan Chase (No. 29), Fifth Third Bank (No. 35), Kohl's Department Store (No. 41), and Whirlpool Corporation just falling outside of the top 50 at No. 51.

Now, my community is looking at multiple, large-scale solar-focused renewable energy projects that could serve as transformative opportunities for the townships, schools and other taxing authorities that could reap the benefits of this type of project – with minimal negative impacts to local infrastructures or institutions.

That is why I encourage you to oppose HB 118, a troubling proposal that would take away landowners' rights by subjecting renewable energy development to local referenda and insert a level of unprecedented variability into an already aggressive site selection (or elimination) process that could negate this type of project but could also dissuade renewable energy users from investing in Ohio.

Economic development officials are on the front lines working to expand Ohio's economy through attracting new opportunities as well as retaining and expanding existing companies. As many of our competing states & communities move to expand access to clean energy to promote growth, how can Ohio explore undercutting it?

I implore the Committee members to promote the development of clean energy investment in Ohio and aid in the continued economic recovery within many of our communities.

For these reasons, I ask that you oppose HB 118. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any of your questions.

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/greenpower/green-power-partnership-fortune-500r-partners-list>