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**Proponent Testimony- Senate Bill 52**  
**Senate Energy & Public Utilities**  
**March 9, 2021**

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Committee, I write as a proponent of Senate Bill 52.

As you consider SB 52, I would ask you to consider the following. Each township in Ohio has different demographics, financial needs, topography, history, culture, etc. Some communities welcome large-scale wind and solar projects and some do not.

One township may have nature reserves, state parks, and wildlife areas that they do not want solar panels near. Another township may welcome the projects if there is a lack of green space nearby.

A township may be made up of flat land, where panels can be screened easily with vegetation. Another township may have rolling topography, with a viewshed for miles. Hundreds of residents would be impacted by the change in their viewshed.

There are townships that have spent years developing land-use plans to protect their agricultural community and farmland. While another township may have a small agricultural community and are ready to do business with a wind or solar developer.

Some townships are "Tornado Alleys", with residents who fear the unexpected impacts of solar panel and wind turbine "shrapnel" from a storm. Other townships have never experienced a tornado and it isn't even on their radar.

If a township has some of the best farmland in the country, they may want to preserve it for growing food. A township with marginal land may opt for solar and wind projects to be sited in their community.

Some townships prefer utility-scale solar over community solar. They find it to be less of a hassle, as the developer is in control. Others want small-scale solar that they monitor, manage and site at a community level.

If a township has little wildlife in a proposed area, then they may opt for a solar or wind project to be sited there. If the chosen acreage is home to Blue Herons, Eagles, White-tailed Deer, Sandhill Crains, Red-Tailed Hawks, Foxes and Coyotes, the residents may not want the wildlife habitats to be fragmented.

Many townships have acreage available where there are no streams, few private septic systems, wells, wetlands, etc close by, so they have no concerns as to placing hundreds of thousands of solar panels on that land. If the opposite is true, they might oppose it.

If a township has over a million visitors to its area yearly because of all of the recreational places it has to offer, it may not want a project sited near those destinations. However, if an area has little tourism to offer, it might be the perfect spot to site solar and wind facilities.

Some townships have very few historical sites near proposed projects. Others have projects being proposed near land that was part of the Underground Railroad or are near Native American lands. This could be seen as offensive to site a project within close proximity.

Some townships think the idea of solar and wind on farmland is much better than the row cropping that many Ohio farmers do today. This bill allows each township to make a decision based upon what is best for their community.

Some townships have a population density that is so low near the project that very few residents would be impacted. Other townships would have hundreds of impacted properties near a project and property value impacts would be a huge concern for that community.

There will be townships who need an economic boost to their community, so they will welcome a developer of said projects. Some townships are financially secure and prefer their rural landscape to stay the way it is.

As you can see there can be a diverse response from each township as to how they will respond to solar and wind projects, based upon the needs and vision of their community. The conversion of hundreds, if not thousands, of acres of land, can have a huge impact on a community.

Participating in the OPSB process is a laborious and tedious process that has a steep learning curve. It is devastatingly expensive to both rural townships and their citizens to participate in the current OPSB siting process. This bill would offer townships the opportunity to decide what is best for their community by way of a free vote, saving townships and residents untold amounts of money.

This legislation says, Ohioans, we trust you, we respect your land-use plans, we will allow you to make a decision that is based on the vision that you have for your community. Ohioans deserve the right to participate in the decision-making process about the future of their communities. We have to live with these decisions and the unintended consequences. We know what is best for our unique, rural communities. Please trust us and give us a chance to vote.

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