

PROPONENT TESTIMONY – SB 52
Jeremy M. Bowersock - Auglaize County
Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
3/09/2021

Chairman Peerson, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Committee. My name is Jeremy Bowersock and I reside in Auglaize County and am also a current board member of the Against Birch Solar group. I am here in support of SB 52 and would like to address my support for the quick and timely passing of SB 52.

Last October I was informed of the Birch Solar Development and was caught completely off guard. Me, my wife, and our two boys have just built our dream home on 9 acres a few years prior. It was a shocking realization to find out that the possibility of a massive 2600 acre solar farm was in the works and would potentially surround our dream home. We never would have thought that such a development would surround us in our rural setting. After attending a few meetings, we came to find out that our home we spent so much blood, sweat, and tears to build may become a nightmare being surrounded by 10' solar panels and chain link fences. As we came to find out later the visual impact is just one of many potential impacts these large scale solar developments bring.

As a business owner in Auglaize county and being involved in the construction industry I was very disturbed to find out the lack of restrictions and zoning requirements that pertain to the solar industry in Ohio. I went to my local township trustees and asked how they could approve such a large development and change zoning without us knowing. We came to find out Logan and Shawnee townships had just as little notice as myself and my neighbors regarding the potential Birch Solar Project. I joined the Against Birch Solar group and became an active board member trying to educate myself and my neighbors on what the large-scale solar developments were all about and how what we could do a group to have a voice. Sadly, we came to realize that the OPSB has all the say in the approval process for the solar and wind developments in Ohio and the local townships and county commissioners have no power or say in the approval process. Even with a resolution passed by Logan and Shawnee townships restricting solar development had no weight in the process.

I have come down a long road in the last few months in regard to my personal stand on solar and wind developments in Ohio under the current laws and regulations or lack thereof. As a property owner, business owner, and personal family connection to the farming community, I feel strong in the need to protect everyone's rights whether for or against the solar and wind industry. Therefore, I see passing SB 52 as a must for all citizens in Ohio. This is a land use issue and zoning issue of a for profit based industrial industry that should have to follow the same guidelines and zoning as every other business that wants to establish a presence in our communities. We need to give back the power to local jurisdictions to put a referendum on the ballot and let those who will live most likely for the rest of our lives with these life altering changes a voice to choose for or against.

Not only have I been impacted personally with the Birch Solar Project but also the potential impact of the Moonwalk Energy project in eastern Auglaize county may impact our business as well. With two solar/wind project possibly impacting me, my family, my properties, and my business in less than a five month time frame on both sides of Auglaize county it's alarming and even more prudent that we get HB 118 passed. I thank you for considering the fast and swift passing of SB 52 for future of Ohio before its too late.