

PROPONENT TESTIMONY
SUB SB52 ENERGY AND PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE
Rachael M. Vonderhaar – Preble County

May 18, 2021

Chairman McColley
Vice-Chairman Schuring
Ranking Member Williams

My name is Rachael Vonderhaar, Farmer, County Commissioner, and Resident of Israel Township in rural Preble County. I write this testimony in support of Sub SB 52 that addresses the need for local decision to responsibly site utility-scale wind and solar in Ohio. The footprint of the physical size and scale of these industrial projects on the land use, view scape, and technology/communication band width alone impact the local communities at a footprint not seen by other forms of energy already located in Ohio. This is new, Ohio needs to make sure our rural communities are not left holding the risk, impact, and expenses that go with it while being left out of the siting.

Preble County has a Land Use Management Plan – In our community we believe agricultural land is valuable to us, Ohio, The United State of America, and the 90% of the world’s consumers that live outside of our country’s borders. Solar can be sited a lot of places. Once fertile agricultural land is taken out of production it is likely to never return to production. Preble County has a standard of care established in our community for valuing an irreplaceable resource.

“Environmental Objectives

- 1. To recognize that the natural environment is an integrated system of interacting land, water and air resources, and to protect the health and stability of this resource system.**
- 2. To regard land as a finite and irreplaceable resource, and to ensure that the use of it does not impair its value for future generations.**
- 3. To provide a safe, healthful and visually pleasing environment in order to enhance the quality of life for all Preble County residents.” (Preble County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Land Use Plan, 2017 pp38)**

In Preble County we have the “40-acre rule,” (how the zoning rule is referred to locally) if you would like to buy agricultural land to build a house on, in Preble County you will need 40+ acres for siting. Otherwise, you will be seeking “special use provision”, essentially, permission from Planning, Zoning, and the Commission for a land use designation. Our community understands the value of agriculture and the need to protect our blessings.

We need to remember these industrial wind and solar facilities are energy generation sites, changing the landscape and community permanently without any long-term job benefits while removing exempting land from the tax rolls under Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreements. Local siting is a must going forward, the impact to our communities will be felt for 30+ years.

I ask you to pass Substitute Senate Bill 52 in a positive manner out of committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachael M. Vonderhaar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Rachael Vonderhaar
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