



Proponent Testimony for Ohio Senate Bill 61

Cathy Cowan Becker

On behalf of Simply Living in conjunction with the Ohio Sustainable Business Council

Ohio Senate Local Government and Elections Committee

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Chair Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath, and members of the Ohio Senate Local Government and Elections Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written proponent testimony on Senate Bill 61. My name is Cathy Cowan Becker, and I am executive director of Simply Living, a community organization that promotes sustainability, environmental awareness, and our local economy. Simply Living often works in conjunction with the Ohio Sustainable Business Council, a statewide coalition of businesses and business networks committed to public policies at the local, state, and federal levels that support a vibrant, just, and sustainable economy.

Both Simply Living and the Ohio Sustainable Business Council strongly support SB 61. Many of our members have solar panels on their homes because they are concerned about the climate crisis. The consensus among world climate scientists is we have just 10 years to cut carbon emissions in half if we want a chance of a livable planet. Our members want to do their part by running their homes and businesses on 100% renewable energy.

Some of our members have gone so far as to create the Clintonville Energy Collaborative, which builds resilience and sustainability by increasing household energy efficiency and increasing the number of households using affordable, renewable energy. This group has installed solar panels on multiple homes in the Clintonville area of Columbus.

Unfortunately, some Homeowners Associations make it impossible for people to install solar panels. Some HOAs ban solar panels outright. Others put unreasonable restrictions on the size and design of rooftop solar systems, making them prohibitively expensive. One of our supporters in Grove City would like to install solar panels but cannot because his HOA prohibits it. This should not be allowed. People should have the right to go solar on their own homes if they wish.

When a home or business goes solar, not only are they doing their part to preserve a livable planet for our children, but they also save money. Solar panels have become exponentially more efficient over the past several years, and the cost has dropped. It doesn't take long for a well-designed solar system to pay for itself and start putting money into a building owner's pocket.

Having homes with solar installations in a neighborhood creates value for the entire community. Homes with solar panels sell for up to \$15,000 more than they otherwise would, boosting the value of other homes around them. Solar panels come in many designs suitable for different locations and different tastes. Glare from solar panels is fleeting and fire risk is very low.

Solar installations help support local jobs and reduce air pollution. They can also lower costs for surrounding electricity customers. By generating electricity close to where it is used, distributed solar reduces the need for transmission infrastructure. This saves money for utilities, which can then be shared by all customers.

It doesn't make sense to allow an HOA to put arbitrary restrictions on something as basic as the ability to control our own energy supply. Homeowners and small businesses should have the right to install solar panels if they wish. SB 61 would provide common-sense protections for homeowners who live in HOAs and want to install solar panels, and we urge you to support it.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 61.