

State Senate Committee:

On behalf of Solar Is Freedom, the largest and highest rated solar company in Ohio, I would like to register support for the passage of SB 61.

Solar is Freedom's mission is to democratize the energy industry so that everyday Ohioans can take control of their energy future and own their primary power source as opposed to relying on utility monopolies. By democratizing the energy industry, we are empowering homeowners to take equity in their electricity and to generate their own power to use and sell locally. We work to bring the economic benefits of jobs and spending into our communities.

Our headquarters is located in Amelia, Ohio and we employ more than 80 Ohioans at wages starting at \$20 per hour. We employ both skilled and unskilled labor and our revenue for 2021 will surpass \$50 million. We operate in the tri-state area with a primary focus in the Cincinnati & Columbus markets.

Working with Homeowners Associations has become a significant pain point to our customers and a significant deterrent to our company's growth. The end result is less good paying jobs and frustrated customers. To date we have over 200 documented cases of HOA's denying solar projects for homeowners who want to have access to their own solar, controlling their energy costs & significantly curbing their carbon footprint. These 200 additional solar projects would equate to over \$5 million in revenue and would justify a minimum of ten more W2 Ohio employees. The majority of these positions provide individuals the opportunity gain specific skills through training & certifications handled locally at our offices in Columbus & Amelia.

Our entire process is catered to providing the homeowner with an exceptional experience and because of that the majority of our customer base comes from customer referrals, especially neighbors. So the 200 figure mentioned previously is exponentially understating the economic opportunity that is being lost both for homeowners in electricity bill savings & soon-to-expire federal tax credits and our company in growth as we increasingly start to compete with national solar installers entering our market.

We are facing HOA denials on a weekly basis and the most frustrating part is that there is absolutely no consistency from one HOA to the next. We have experienced countless examples of HOA's bending or breaking rules to justify denying solar access to their homeowners. A recent example of this is a Dublin HOA board member having solar installed for their own home in the same neighborhood and then changing the rules so that no one else can get access to solar. This has prompted the homeowner and Solar Is Freedom to expend a significant amount of time, money & resources on taking the HOA to court in which there is a hearing on April 5th.

There are some HOA bylaws that were written decades ago completely outlawing a solar panel that looks nothing like the current technology, but the overwhelming majority of HOA denials do not come from specific solar language in the bylaws. Most times the bylaws are so outdated that there is nothing mentioning solar, so the final verdict comes down to a subjective & arbitrary 'no' because there is a blanket statement in the bylaws saying that anything not mentioned in the bylaws has to be approved by the HOA board.

In summary, the vast majority of Ohio homeowners living in a neighborhood with an HOA are missing out on the opportunity to save tens of thousands of dollars in electricity bill savings, capitalize on a federal tax credit that is soon expiring and significantly reduce their carbon footprint. The solar installer job position is the #1 fastest growing job in the USA and there is no doubt that solar energy along with wind and other renewables are the future of energy generation. The current authority that Ohio HOA's have over solar access is stunting the growth of Solar Is Freedom and other Ohio-owned solar companies allowing installers in nearby states where solar access laws already exist to grow at a rate that we cannot compete with. If Ohio wants to be a leader in renewable energy and green jobs, we need to start by simply allowing all homeowners to have access to choose solar.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address this issue with you. Please know that we are prepared to follow up with you and any committee members in whatever way you deem appropriate. Really appreciate all that you do for our great state!

Best,  
Jake

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