



State Representative Tim Barhorst

*House Bill 349 Sponsor Testimony
House Economic & Workforce Development Committee
April 9th, 2024*

Chairman Swearingen, Vice-Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch and members of the House Economic & Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 349 or ENERGIZE Ohio.

Despite the blessings of an abundant supply of natural gas in the eastern portions of our great state, communities everywhere are plagued by a lack of access to this product produced right here in Ohio. Unfortunately for the 85th District, specifically Logan & Champaign counties, our area is no exception.

Lack of access to natural gas can kill a local factory expansion, thus preventing the attraction of new businesses to local industrial parks and halting new residential development despite the hurdles that can inhibit the jobs they create in our local communities. Businesses already have enough regulatory, tax, labor and inflation hurdles confronting new expansions or locations – ***a lack of infrastructure to the factory floor should not get in the way.***

What excites me about this bill is that it helps lower long-term costs for companies wanting to invest in our state and creates opportunities in every corner to use more of Ohio's natural gas right here in Ohio.

When infrastructure barriers exist to growing jobs and the economy, whether for water, sewer, roadways or even training; the State of Ohio has created successful programs in the past to help business and communities address them. Using these existing development programs as a model, Representative Jones and I worked with various stakeholders to develop this legislative proposal before the Committee today.

I was shocked to learn that despite the abundance of gas in this state, we do not have the infrastructure to get it to the communities that desperately need it like mine that I represent in Western Ohio. What is even more shocking is the scale of which many areas of our state are experiencing this same issue.

If there is spare capacity, it cannot be delivered at a competitive price because pipelines must be built to get it there - often without excess capacity to spur more growth and spread costs out to multiple future users.

Ohio is a leader in natural gas production, but we are not a leader in delivering it to Ohio's growing businesses and communities. If we are going to be a state that touts our record toward economic development, *this needs to change*.

Chairman Swearingen and members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to begin deliberations on this very important legislation and we would be happy to answer any questions after Representative Jones has delivered his portion of the testimony.