



State Representative Tim Barhorst

*House Bill 349 Sponsor Testimony
House Finance Committee
June 25th, 2024*

Chairman Edwards, Vice-Chair LaRe, Ranking Sweeney and members of the House Finance 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.

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.

HB 349 will help 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 our state.

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.

The sub bill adopted in the Economic & Workforce Development Committee reflects some adjustments that are worthy of the committee's attention:

- A new line-item that pulls \$20 million from the GRF instead of using existing funds through the Department of Development that are now encumbered.
 - This creates a Pipeline Loan Fund for easement acquisition.
- Restructured tax incentives to limit the incentive to only *new* investment in an ENERGIZE Ohio Zone rather than existing infrastructure or infrastructure beyond the zone.
 - Rate to be negotiated and specified in a local ordinance/resolution between 25%-75% for a set 10 years.

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*.

I'll now hand it over to my joint sponsor Representative Jones for his portion of the testimony.