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Ohio House of Representatives Public Utilities Committee  
Written Proponent Testimony on House Bill 197  
Green Energy Ohio  
Jane Harf  
September 20, 2023

Chair Stein, Vice Chair Blasdel, Ranking Member Weinstein, and Members of the Public Utilities Committee, my name is Jane Harf and I am the Executive Director of Green Energy Ohio (GEO). Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on behalf of House Bill 197.

Green Energy Ohio (GEO) is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable energy policies, technologies, and practices. GEO has been an active participant in the Ohio energy arena for over twenty years, partnering with a diverse constituency of individuals, businesses, community and government entities, academic institutions, and other nonprofits who share our mission.

GEO hosted its first statewide Solar Tour in 2017, at a time when residential solar installations were relatively new, and information about solar energy was harder to find. On the Solar Tour, Ohioans opened their homes to their friends and neighbors and proudly showcased their systems, sharing the benefits they were receiving and how to go about becoming a solar household. Today we have well over 100,000 homes in Ohio powered at least in part by solar energy. Ohio companies engaged in residential solar installations have grown as the demand for solar panels has grown. A robust supply chain exists, with over 85 manufacturers serving the solar sector. According to the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), of which Green Energy Ohio is a state affiliate, there were almost 7,500 jobs in the solar industry in Ohio through the second quarter of 2023.

And yet we know that there are barriers to installing a solar system. Certainly, cost is at the top of the list for many. And location – Ohio has many wonderful neighborhoods and residential areas with mature trees or surrounded by woodlands, like mine in Licking County, making a rooftop system unfeasible. Not everyone is a homeowner – occupants of rental units or condominiums have little, if any, control over what goes on their roofs or in their open areas. Worst of all, neighborhoods with the fewest resources have been left behind when it comes to technology that could reduce the proportion of their income spent on energy,

Community solar can address those barriers and create a more equitable and just distribution of solar power. The subscription system allows residents to buy into an array without taking on the financial and logistical issues of a rooftop system. I mentioned that I live in Licking County. I get my power from The Energy Cooperative, who operates a community solar program called “Our Solar” to which co-op members can subscribe. I encourage you to visit [oursolar.coop/theenergycoop/](http://oursolar.coop/theenergycoop/) for the more information. The fact that rural co-ops and municipal systems can engage in this practice now is yet another reason why Ohioans in investor-owned utility territories should have the same opportunity.

In order to expand access to clean, efficient, and affordable solar power, Green Energy Ohio urges the Committee to move forward with HB 197. Thank you for consideration of this testimony.