



Proponent Testimony by Cathy Cowan Becker
Ohio Sustainable Business Council
House Bill 197
House Public Utilities Committee
April 24, 2024

Chairman Stein, Vice-Chair Blasdel, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the House Public Utilities Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 197 (HB 197), a bill to establish a Community Solar Pilot Program in Ohio. My name is Cathy Cowan Becker, and I am testifying today on behalf of the Ohio Sustainable Business Council and as a longtime sustainability advocate in Central Ohio.

As you know, the demand for electricity in Ohio is growing. Amazon, Google, Meta, and other large tech companies are building large data centers across the state and in Central Ohio. One of these Amazon data centers is being built across the main road from my house.

AEP expects the demand for electricity to double by 2028. Many of these companies want to power their operations with renewable energy.

It's not just big tech companies who want renewable energy. Many Ohio citizens and small businesses would love to power their homes with solar. Unfortunately, most people and businesses cannot install solar directly on their own roofs. Small businesses often rent the building they work out of and share a roof with other businesses, such as in a strip mall. If they work out of their home, they may live in an apartment building or a condo where they don't own the roof. Their roof may be too steep or shaded by trees. Or they may lack the up-front funds to pay for a solar system.

That's where community solar comes in. Community solar allows people and businesses to buy into a solar project that is not attached to their home. They can use 100% renewable energy for a monthly subscription fee rather than installing an entire rooftop solar system.

HB 197 would create a pilot community solar program of 1500 MW in Ohio, of which 500 MW would be located on distressed sites. I am more than certain there is more demand for solar in Ohio than 1500 MW of power. There's already a waitlist for community solar through our Rural Electric Cooperatives.

This pilot program would show community solar can be done here just as it has been done in 22 other states. It's time to allow everyone in Ohio access to this program.

Community solar would be great for Ohio's economy. A [study from Ohio University](#) found that this pilot program alone could contribute nearly \$3.49 billion in gross state product (GSP), 27,254 Ohio job years with total earnings of \$2.48 billion, and \$409.5 million in local tax revenue over its lifetime.

It would also be great for consumers, including small business. Community solar provides savings of 5-20% on utility bills.

Don't forget that First Solar, a leading solar panel manufacturer, is located in here in Ohio.

If community solar was available in Ohio, I would personally subscribe. I have been trying to put solar panels on the roof of my home for the past year, only to be stymied by one delay after another from my HOA. All people and businesses deserve to be energy independent.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on behalf of HB 197. I am happy to answer your questions.