



Cleveland Owns  
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[www.clevelandowns.coop](http://www.clevelandowns.coop)

April 22, 2024

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on behalf of House Bill 197 (HB 197), a bill to enable community solar, which would open the benefits of solar to a large number of Ohioans.

My name is Jonathan Welle. I am the lead organizer of Cleveland Owns, a nonprofit in Cleveland that fights for community ownership of solar and other productive assets. I grew up in Mayfield, Ohio, where my dad was a pastor and my mom a mental health counselor.

HB 197 would set Ohio up to succeed in the green economy. It's a gateway to installing new solar arrays that would benefit low-income communities in rural, suburban, and urban areas of our state through the benefits of virtual net metering.

For years Cleveland Owns has been working towards building Ohio's first community-owned solar array. HB 197 would help us get there. It would create new opportunities for community ownership of solar through nonprofits, rural electric cooperatives, clean energy cooperatives, tribal authorities, and municipal electric utilities. Each of these community ownership mechanisms create an opportunity for local control and governance by communities too often excluded from decision making related to solar and the benefits of our energy system. HB 197 is a positive step towards a fairer, more democratic energy system.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jonathan Welle'.

Jonathan Welle  
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