

## Proponent Testimony for Ohio HB 197: Establishing Community Solar Pilot and Solar Development Programs

Chairman Stein, Vice Chair Robb Blasdel, Ranking Member Weinstein, and Members of the Public Utilities Committee,

My name is Mryia Williams, and I am providing written testimony to express my strong support for Ohio HB 197, which aims to establish a Community Solar pilot and solar development program in our state. As an advocate for solar energy and a resident of Ohio, I am honored to provide proponent testimony for HB 197. This bill represents a significant step forward in expanding access to clean, renewable energy for all Ohioans while promoting economic development and diversifying our energy resources.

It is worth highlighting the recent developments in the realm of solar energy that underscores the urgency and importance of passing this legislation. Specifically, I want to note the Monday, April 22nd Solar For All funding announcements. These announcements on Federal funding signal a commitment to providing resources for communities facing the highest energy burdens, ensuring they have access to the benefits of solar energy.

By passing HB 197, Ohio can seize the opportunity to leverage the Solar For All funding and establish programs that empower our residents to participate in the solar energy transition. Community Solar pilot programs, as proposed in this bill, would enable individuals to access the benefits of solar power without the need for rooftop installations, thereby breaking down barriers to entry by allowing access to Community Solar in our state.

Ohio would not be alone in embracing Community Solar. Currently, 24 states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia, Vermont, and Washington, along with the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have implemented Community Solar programs. Many of these states have similarities with Ohio, demonstrating that Community Solar is a viable and effective solution for increasing access to locally produced energy across diverse regions.

Moreover, it's essential to recognize the pressing need to expand our energy resources to keep pace with the demands of a growing population and emerging technologies. PJM, the regional transmission organization serving Ohio and other states, emphasizes the importance of diversifying our energy mix to meet the needs of today and our future.

As electric vehicles, data centers, manufacturing facilities, and warehouses become increasingly prevalent, the strain on our energy infrastructure will continue to grow. Quick action is needed to offset times of high energy demand causing outages - Community Solar has the potential to provide distributed energy, added resilience in the face of natural disasters, and have economic benefits to local communities. Therefore, initiatives like HB 197 that promote the development of renewable energy sources such as Community Solar are crucial for ensuring a resilient and sustainable energy future.

Furthermore, HB 197 enjoys broad bipartisan support. In a time of political division, this bill represents a rare opportunity for lawmakers from both sides of the aisle to come together to support a common goal: advancing energy initiatives that benefit all Ohioans. By harnessing the bipartisan momentum behind HB 197, we can demonstrate our commitment to building a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable energy future for our state.

In conclusion, I urge the members of this committee to support Ohio HB 197 and help pave the way for Community Solar pilot and solar development programs in our state. By doing so, we can unlock the full potential of solar energy, create economic opportunities, and uplift communities across Ohio. The passage of HB 197 would not just be a legislative action; it is a commitment to a resilient, affordable, and more sustainable future for all Ohioans.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mryia Williams  
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Solar United Neighbors