



# OEC [ Action Fund ]

**Proponent Testimony  
Ohio Senate Bill 275 (Dolan)  
Ohio Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee  
November 12, 2024**

Good morning Chair Reineke, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Ohio Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee. I am Nolan Rutschilling, Managing Director of Energy Policy for the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund (OEC Action Fund). Our organization works for a clean, healthy Ohio where our democracy empowers all communities to thrive in harmony with the environment. Thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony on Ohio Senate Bill 275 (SB 275).

SB 275 takes an important step to diversify our electric grid and ensure Ohioans have a clean, affordable and reliable energy system. By establishing the definition of Virtual Net Metering, SB 275 expands the ability of businesses and public institutions to generate their own electricity, allowing them to pursue cost savings without restrictions around adjacent land. This modest change allows commercial customers to use electricity generated anywhere within the service territory of the electric distribution utility where the customer is located, as long as the property fits the distinctions within the bill. This will increase distributed generation in Ohio, improving our grid reliability and increasing access to clean energy and storage systems. Particularly of benefit is the value this legislation could bring to public institutions, hospitals, and nonprofits who have limited land but seek out distributed generation as a cost savings tool or to meet their energy goals.

We do have a few suggestions to increase the impact of the legislation. First, we support modifications to the agricultural land restrictions, to better allow Ohioans to make their own decisions regarding responsible development of their property. Second, the OEC Action Fund has some suggestions for additional land use types to be added to the eligibility criteria (under Sec. 4928.676 E). We recommend adding eligibility for development on land owned by metropolitan housing authorities (MHAs). This land use is similar to that of land banks, but with a focus on affordable access to housing and energy. Allowing Virtual Net Metering projects on MHA properties will allow affordable housing organizations to generate revenue for their organizations or offer generation to correctly metered housing projects.

We also recommend expanding the definition of eligible land types to include “An energy

community under 26 U.S.C. § 45(b)(11)(B)(iii)<sup>1</sup> that is within a census tract, or adjoining census tract, with a closed coal mine or retired coal-fired power plant.” This addition allows communities who are impacted by the energy transition to receive benefits from Virtual Net Metering projects, similar to the existing language in the legislation that allows projects on property affected by subsidence from mining. We consider this addition crucial to provide support to energy communities that previously relied on coal plants for jobs and community tax income.

Overall, Senate Bill 275 is a responsible step forward for energy reliability and affordability in Ohio. The OEC Action Fund urges passage of SB 275. Ohio has been a leader in energy choice for decades, allowing Ohioans to select where their energy comes from and what type of energy to use. This legislation removes an unnecessary barrier that restricts energy access, enabling more Ohio businesses and local governments to take advantage of the cost saving benefits of Virtual Net Metering. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

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