

Testimony by Jeffrey Clawson on Senate Bill 247

*Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
December 3, 2023*

Chairman Reineke, Vice-Chair McColley, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on Senate Bill 247 (SB 247), a bill to establish a framework for the Community Solar Pilot Program (CSPP) and encourage community solar facility development in Ohio. My name is Jeffrey Clawson, and I am writing as a citizen of Ohio who can already take advantage of the benefits of solar power. I am financially able to have a solar PV system installed in my home. Many people in Ohio, particularly in rural areas such as Auburn Twp. (Geauga County) where I live are not as fortunate as I am.

Senate Bill 247 establishes a **Community Solar Pilot Program (CSPP)** to support the development of community solar facilities (CSFs). These CSFs allow multiple subscribers, including individuals, businesses, and nonprofits, to share the benefits of local solar energy production. Key provisions include:

1. **Establishment of the CSPP:**
 - PUCO must certify up to **1,500 MW** of community solar capacity across Ohio.
 - 500 MW are reserved for facilities built on distressed sites, such as brownfields.
2. **Subscriber Benefits:**
 - Subscribers receive bill credits for their share of the electricity generated, helping lower their utility costs.
 - Ensures guaranteed savings by balancing subscription costs with bill credit values.
3. **Distressed Sites and Environmental Justice:**
 - Promotes economic development by incentivizing solar projects on underutilized or contaminated properties.
 - Eligible CSFs may qualify for grants under the Brownfield Remediation Program.
4. **Consumer Protections and Equity:**
 - Establishes rules to prevent undue fees, ensure transparency in subscriptions, and protect consumers from early termination charges.
5. **Nondiscrimination and Interconnection:**
 - Prohibits electric distribution utilities (EDUs) from imposing discriminatory fees on CSFs.
 - Mandates efficient and safe interconnection of CSFs to the grid.

I would like to emphasize several key benefits of establishing community solar projects in the state. One of the primary advantages is increased access to renewable energy for residents who cannot install solar panels on their properties, such as renters and those living in multi-family housing. This initiative would allow these individuals to participate in solar energy programs, thus promoting energy equity and enabling a broader population segment to benefit from clean energy sources. Additionally, the bill guarantees bill savings for subscribers, helping to lower electricity costs for participants while contributing to a cleaner electricity grid, which is expected to yield long-term economic and environmental benefits for communities across Ohio.

Another significant benefit highlighted by supporters is the potential for local economic development. Community solar projects can create jobs and stimulate investment in local infrastructure, particularly in economically depressed areas. The bill mandates that developers cover the costs associated with

necessary grid improvements, which they can afford to do, alleviating financial burdens on electric customers. These projects can also reduce reliance on extensive transmission lines by generating clean energy locally, further enhancing grid resilience during peak demand periods. Community solar represents a sustainable solution that addresses energy needs and fosters economic growth and environmental stewardship in Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 247. This bill represents a significant step in making renewable energy affordable, equitable, and accessible to all Ohioans while boosting economic and environmental outcomes. I am happy to answer any questions.

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