

Testimony by Ariel Miller on S 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 SB 247 to authorize a Community Solar Pilot Program for Ohio. My name is Ariel Miller, and I volunteer as Advocacy Co-Chair of Faith Communities Go Green, an interfaith group in Southwest Ohio. I am a Christian in the Episcopal faith community.

This bill will open the door for thousands of low-income households to reduce their monthly energy bills by accessing low-cost solar electricity even if they are unable to install rooftop solar. It will be especially beneficial to renters. Monthly electric bills are part of the reason for Ohio's housing affordability crisis. For a decade I ran an Episcopal foundation in our diocese which made grants to local churches for their community ministries. Many of these churches used the grants to aid community-based emergency assistance nonprofits, and I regularly heard that these grassroots services ran out of dollars for utility assistance at the beginning of the month. Helping low-income families to reduce their monthly electric bills will reduce their danger of utility shut-offs, which can be deadly, especially during heat waves.

This bill will create 1,500 MW of new, locally-generated clean energy, reducing demand on Ohio's electric grid and reducing the risk of blackouts, especially during the increasingly severe and prolonged heat waves which we are suffering in Ohio. By reducing peak demand at such times, you are helping to keep rates lower for all ratepayers.

Finally, by passing this bill and encouraging Gov. DeWine to sign it, you will reduce CO₂ and particulate emissions from fossil-fuel fired plants, improving air quality and helping to prevent asthma and cardiovascular disease.

I was thrilled when HB 450, a community solar proposal sponsored by many Republicans, was introduced in the last General Assembly and hope and pray that both chambers will pass the current bills introduced in the 135th General Assembly. Thanks to Senator Lang for sponsoring SB 247. It is a win-win for Ohioans' health and housing security and I respectfully and hopefully encourage you to pass the bill out of the committee and send it to the floor of the Senate for a vote before the end of the Lame Duck session.

Thank you for considering my request.