

Proponent Testimony by Susan Gordon on Senate Bill 247  
Director of Community Building, Slavic Village Development  
Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee  
December 3, 2024

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 behalf of Senate Bill 247 (SB 247). My name is Susan Gordon, and I am the Director of Community Building at Slavic Village Development (SVD). I have been employed by SVD for approximately 20 years.

Our mission at SVD, as a community development corporation, is to work with and for our residents, businesses, and institutions to promote civic engagement, community empowerment, and neighborhood investment. SVD is a forward-looking, service-driven organization which honors its neighborhood's resiliency, diverse cultural heritage, and inclusiveness. We are committed to building a community defined by its high quality of life, unique identity, and healthy and active living.

SB 247 creates a small-scale community solar pilot program that will upgrade the utility grid by using private capital. The bill allows community solar to expand across Ohio, creating jobs and making valuable use of currently distressed sites. One such site that would likely benefit from passage of SB 247 is the Harvard Refuse Landfill in the Slavic Village neighborhood on the southeast side of Cleveland.

The 100-acre parcel of land was a former operating, now closed, landfill. This orphaned landfill has failed to provide value to the community and generates negative environmental and health consequences for our neighborhood residents. The property has been in a long-term receivership and has not been of interest to developers or other productive uses as a result of ongoing issues related to leachate, methane, and ongoing air quality issues, which still have not been resolved. Furthermore, a demolition company currently operating on the parcel has deposited large piles of debris which contribute to fugitive dust issues, negatively impacting air quality and residents' health, exacerbating medical conditions such as asthma.

This bill presents an opportunity to positively impact the citizens SVD works to serve. For the first time in decades there is a real opportunity to move this property toward a sustainable and beneficial use, alleviating environmental concerns the landfill currently presents. SVD is hopeful that a recently awarded federal grant will be used, in part, for construction of a solar power plant on a portion of the Harvard Refuse acreage. Allowing development of a community solar facility increases the likelihood of that project coming to fruition, converting the problematic, orphaned landfill into productive property and a source of hope and pride for the neighborhood.

As a result of the solar project, the owner of that property would be required to pay significant property taxes. Those property taxes would, in turn, benefit the same citizens that have experienced the greatest harm from this property. Furthermore, once it is

developed into a solar facility, hopefully a community solar facility, the decommissioning requirements of the bill will help maintain the property's value for years to come. The prospect of developing this land into something beneficial to the environment and our community is exciting to SVD and the residents we serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on behalf of SB 247 and for your attention to this important issue. We encourage you to pass this legislation.