

Testimony of Joseph Henri, SVP Policy for Dimension Renewable Energy in Support of [SB247]

December 2, 2024

Dimension Energy (Dimension) thanks the committee for the opportunity to submit comments on SB247. Dimension develops, owns, and operates community solar projects across the United States. Since our founding in 2018, we have developed more than \$400 million in solar projects and we intend to deploy more than \$3 billion over the next five years. We already serve more than 20,000 customers, including more than 10,000 low-income households, and we will serve many thousands more as more of our projects come online next year and in the years ahead.

Dimension operates across 12 states, in programs like the one envisioned in SB247. We build 5 Mwac projects on 25-30 acres of land that we lease for 20-30 years. We go through permitting with the local municipality or county planning department and we pay for 100% of the costs to interconnect to the utility grid. Community solar projects like ours are helping family farms from Virginia to California by leasing their least-productive lands and giving them back the land in pristine condition. We're helping families make ends meet by providing energy savings every month, and supporting communities with property taxes and good-paying jobs.

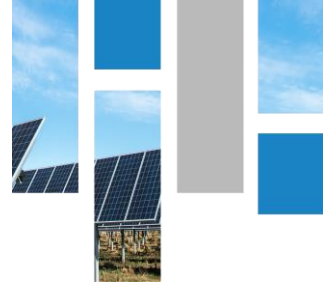
A community solar program will spur economic development, help bring new electric supply on line quickly, and support local jurisdictions.

Dimension is an indicator of the kind of investment that will come to Ohio with the creation of a community solar program. Our current portfolio of Ohio project sites represent more than \$500 million of investment, thousands of hours of employment for hundreds of people, and decades of property taxes in the communities where we will be sited.

Community solar can also play an important role in helping Ohio meeting its growing need for new generation capacity to serve manufacturing and data center loads. Small community solar projects interconnecting to utility distribution grids can come to market in two years, compared to the seven to ten years it would take an equivalent amount of utility-scale generation to get through interconnection, permitting and construction.

Community solar projects are small and subject to local land use regulation. We don't force a project on a local community. We work with local stakeholders and we respect their wishes.

In our work across the United States, Dimension has heard many utilities object to community solar programs like this one. Incumbent monopolies are always opposed to third-party investment on which they cannot earn their high returns, and community solar is no exception. If this bill passes into law, community solar developers like Dimension will invest well over \$100 million, strengthening rural distribution grids that have been ignored for decades. This is unacceptable in the minds of monopoly utilities, since they won't be able to earn a rate of return on the investment they didn't bother to make.



Utilities frequently talk about cost shifts, but not the benefits associated with distributed generation projects. Calling a new program a cost shift is an inaccurate and inflammatory way of stopping third party investments and obscuring the benefit side of the equation. It might seem obvious that community solar subscribers who choose to get their energy from a local solar project that doesn't require the use of high voltage transmission lines, shouldn't be charged by the utility for energy or transmission—but utilities aren't willing to reduce their revenue requirements, even when people aren't using their equipment and supply their own energy to the grid. A cost shift means the utility is keeping itself whole at the expense of ratepayers.

Utilities talk about the costs of community solar, but not the benefits. Among the tangible benefits of a community solar program:

- Billions of dollars in investment to Ohio communities,
- Reduction in wholesale electric prices for all of Ohio's load-serving entities because a community solar program would reduce utility energy demand during the peak hours of the day,
- Support for family farms,
- High-paying construction jobs and procurement from a wide range of Ohio companies, and
- Property tax income for cities and counties for decades.

Community solar is a no-regrets proposal for several reasons. Its small size relative to Ohio's electric market will minimize any rate impacts, and the speed with which community solar projects can come to market to meet rapidly increasing demand for electric generation. And for those who subscribe to community solar projects, meaningful reductions in their monthly electricity bills.

Thank you for your consideration.