

Testimony by Robert Kloos on Senate Bill 247

*Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
December 2, 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 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.

Maybe thirty years ago, a wise woman recommended a book that woke me up: “The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight” by Thom Hartmann. You might recognize the author; he continues to write well-referenced books and articles that I find enlightening and helpful, resources that benefit us all.

Fundamentally, “The Last Hours” taught me that all the fossil fuels we extract from the Earth were the result of cataclysmic events that shook our planet two hundred million years ago. Much of the carbon that thrived on the surface was buried, compressed, and stored until we found ways to bring it to the surface. All the oil, gas, and coal that we mine today is sunlight that was transformed over time. Indeed, fossil fuels we continue to burn have powered our industrial age, our transportation needs, and comfort for our lifetimes. And we have used most of already.

The Earth is no longer producing this relatively accessible and cheap energy source. Once we have extracted and burned these carbon-rich resources, they will be gone forever. I have often wondered how our planet would manage should we ever suffer another collision with an asteroid. We would likely go the way of the dinosaurs. My father was a business man, a Republican, and a father of nine. Were he still with us, he would probably admonish us to leave the rest of the fossil fuels right where they are. That’s good conservative practice. Anyone in the 22nd century would be grateful for our abstinence should they find themselves without the sun for a prolonged period of time.

Hartmann also stated that every day, our planet is the bountiful recipient of ten times the sunlight we need to power everything that relies on electricity, heat, or other energy sources, not to mention all living organisms great and small. The sun has always been our life source. We are utterly and ultimately dependent on the sun for everything, all the time.

Solar panels are the silent witness to our reliance on the star we call our sun. One here or one there, or arrayed by the thousands on grazing land, brown fields, rooftops, or poles that allow them to rotate and track the sun’s rising and setting, solar panels are an emission-free and stable source of energy.

I have relied on solar panels on my home since 2008. My current, upgraded array provides up to 90% of my household needs in the best months, and always as much as 20% when the days are shorter and I'm dealing with fallen snow or cloudy days. When the sun is not shining, my electricity is provided by wind turbines. I no longer burn natural gas in my home. I have no gas meter in my basement.

Senate Bill 247 is about community power, a community resource, a community endeavor to meet our energy needs. And because we have learned over the last four hundred years that this nation will rise or fall as a function of our strength as a united entity, this bit of legislation brings me great hope for Ohio.

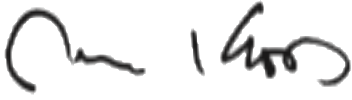
The recent election prompted some pundits or commentators to suggest we are a divided people. *I suggest we are not divided, but we are disconnected.* We have, for too long, praised independence as a strength to the detriment of our interdependence that has served us well. Just as we all benefit from roads and water supply lines and public education, our sources of energy have enabled most of us to secure a safe and comfortable livelihood. But where would we be without the infrastructure that is there for everyone? How long could we survive without water from our taps, city services, or a prompt response should we ever have to dial 9-1-1?

Affordable, accessible, and environmentally safe sources of energy are absolutely essential if our future is to be secure. Solar energy provided by a community-based plan is a brilliant way forward, and perhaps our only responsible route. It will acknowledge our interdependency, not just on each other, but upon our planet as well.

This Senate bill is a hopeful sign, a responsible and respectful path to an energy secure future. Solar is reliable, not because the sun always shines, but because we are experienced enough to know there will be times when conservation and living within our means is our only choice. We are living on a planet that has limited resources. History shows we demonstrate our worst selves when we fight to gobble up control over limited resources. We are at our best when we learn to live within our means. Sustainability is not an option; it is an ultimatum. Sustainability is the unwritten "cause of death" for many a civilization. The fact that the sun sets is a healthy reminder that our growth is always limited.

I fully support the Community Solar Pilot Program and encourage the deployment of all resources available to plan for a sustainable future for Ohioans, for this nation, and all our living neighbors on this beautiful Earth.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Kloos".

Robert Kloos
Pastor, Community of Saint Peter, *retired 6.30.2024*
2463 Kingston Road
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118
bkloos@sbcglobal.net
216.469.4147