



Proponent Testimony by Nicholas Minekime on Senate Bill 247

CEO, Sunrise Mountain Partners LLC
Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
December 2, 2024

Chairman Reineke, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Energy and Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 247 (SB 247), a bill to support the development of Community Solar in Ohio.

I write to you as the CEO of Sunrise Mountain Partners, a solar development company with a profound commitment to Ohio's energy future. I have experience in the development, ownership, and operation of 50 solar farms around the country.

I was raised in Dublin and graduated from Dublin Coffman High School. I built Sunrise Mountain Partners to pursue expanding solar access in my home state and bring tax revenue to our local schools, towns, and counties. I recognize the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead as Ohio continues to evolve and adapt in the face of changing energy needs and increasing energy demand.

I have signed long-term leases with nearly 30 landowners from Van Wert to Fulton County to the village of Sheffield in Lorain County to Barlow Township in Washington County. Our typical landowner comes from a multi-generational line of farmers, would like to keep farming the remainder of their land, and sees solar as an additional crop yield for their property.

Take Steve Gerfen, for example, a sheep, hog, and cattle farmer in Marion County whose family will provide a vegetative maintenance contract where he will graze his 800 ewes under our panels. His sons, Nole and Clay, plan to expand their flock and pursue grazing other solar projects in the state. Along with the Gerfen family, we will continue to consult with the sheep specialist at the Farm Bureau and the Ohio State University College of Agriculture.

The projects will provide clean, reliable energy and tax revenue directly to the towns and communities they will inhabit. We estimate that each of our small community solar farms will bring \$10 million to the community, with tens of thousands of dollars going directly to tax revenue.

On behalf of Sunrise Mountain Partners, I stand firmly behind Senate Bill 247. This bill signifies a critical opportunity for Ohio to embrace renewable energy, drive economic growth, and build a more resilient future for our state and electrical grid. This bill aligns perfectly with our mission of providing clean, reliable energy solutions that strengthen communities and safeguard our environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on behalf of SB 247. I am happy to answer your questions.

Sincerely,

Nick Minekime