



**Proponent Testimony by Cathy Cowan Becker
Ohio Sustainable Business Council
Senate Bill 275
Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
December 10, 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 testimony in support of Senate Bill 275 (SB 275). My name is Cathy Cowan Becker, and I am testifying today on behalf of the Ohio Sustainable Business Council, a statewide coalition of businesses and business networks committed to public policies at the local, state, and federal levels that support a vibrant, just, and sustainable economy.

SB 275 would require electric utilities to provide for virtual net metering, which allows a customer to aggregate multiple electric meters, even if the meters are not all on the same premises.

Similar to regular net metering, virtual net metering allows for a debit or credit to the customer's energy costs, depending on the amount of energy supplied to the buildings involved. If the generation supplied is less than the business uses, the business pays the difference to the utility. If the generation is greater than the energy consumed, the business gets a credit (not a payment) from the utility.

The only difference from regular net metering is that the buildings involved do not have to all be in the same place, as long as they are all part of the same utility certified territory.

Virtual net metering would create numerous advantages for businesses that want to generate at least some of their own energy supply, whether through solar, wind, gas, batteries, or another source.

- **Cost savings.** Businesses with multiple buildings or locations could create one energy generation facility, such as a small (under 50 MW) ground-mount solar system, and use that to power most or all their operations, resulting in enormous cost savings.
- **Sustainability.** Powering businesses with renewable energy would greatly lower their carbon footprint, as well as air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions overall.
- **Resiliency and self-reliance.** Generating its own energy would create a reliable source of electricity for a business, even during extreme weather events or other grid disruptions.
- **Grid reliability.** By generating some or all of its own energy, a business is putting electricity onto the grid, which is then distributed to others, making the entire grid more reliable, especially during times of peak demand.
- **Energy expansion to meet increased demand.** As more businesses take advantage of virtual net metering, more electricity will be generated, thus helping to meet increased demand.

As you know, the demand for electricity in Ohio is growing rapidly. Amazon, Google, Meta, and other large tech companies are building data centers across the state and in Central Ohio. Demand for electricity is expected to double within a decade.

While there is no single solution to this problem, virtual net metering has an important role to play. By encouraging businesses to generate their own electricity, virtual net metering will increase the amount of energy on the grid while making the grid more reliable, saving money, and increasing sustainability.

Another feature of SB 275 that OSBC supports is the siting of generation facilities on distressed properties, such as former coal mining land, brownfields, former landfills, or industrial properties. There are thousands of such properties across Ohio, mostly sitting vacant and not generating tax revenue.

SB 275 would incentivize using such properties to generate the electricity Ohio needs for businesses that could use the cost savings to create thousands to millions of jobs.

As we see it, SB 275 would support the triple bottom line: People, Planet, Profit.

- By helping power businesses, it's good for people who own and work there.
- By helping businesses lower their carbon footprints, it's good for the planet.
- By helping businesses save money and create jobs, it's good for profit.

The main change OSBC would like to see in SB 275 is to allow virtual net metering on agricultural land. The projects that power businesses through virtual net metering are not like utility scale solar and wind projects of hundreds of megawatts. They are small-scale projects, usually a few to a couple dozen megawatts, nowhere near the 50 MW threshold required to go through the Ohio Power Siting Board.

Most agricultural production facilities have multiple buildings, even multiple locations, that would benefit from all the advantages of virtual net metering. Farms are businesses and deserve the opportunity to increase self-reliance and grid reliability, all while saving money and lowering carbon pollution.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on SB 275. This bill represents a significant step forward in increasing the reliability of our electricity system and supply, as well as the overall sustainability and prosperity of Ohio's businesses and the people they employ.