

May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Charles Schilling, Washington County Commissioner  
223 Putnam Street  
Marietta, OH 45750

Ohio Senate  
c/o Senate General Government Committee  
77 S High Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: Interested Party Testimony on HB 33 (SC0484)

Chairman Rulli, Vice Chairman Schuring and Ranking Member DeMora,

As a Washington County resident my entire life I have seen and experienced the ups and downs of Economic Development. I have owned a real estate holdings company for the past 26 years. During that time I have developed residential real estate, including new homes and apartment complexes. I have been a Washington County Commissioner for the past 2 1/2 years. In my time as a Commissioner I have seen firsthand where the lack of natural gas supply is a real issue.

I have been a strong supporter for years of our Southeastern Ohio Port Authority (SeOPA). A few years ago, within my first month in office the SeOPA purchased an AEP Muskingum River generation facility. This facility sits in Washington and Morgan counties and is positioned with in one mile of three large interstate natural gas pipelines. The Muskingum River Industrial Park (MRIP) is a big part of our footprint for Economic Development in Washington County. The SeOPA currently has another former AEP generation facility (AMP) under contract on Route 7 between Marietta and Belpre. Moving forward, the connectivity of these two sites thru road, river and rail makes this a very exiting road map for Economic Development.

Shortly after acquiring the Muskingum River Industrial Park early in 2021, SeOPA entered into conversations with a developer that was proposing a \$100MM methanol production facility. The 10-month development process ended with the project being located in Texas as opposed to SE Ohio. A primary factor in this

decision: The cost of extending the gas line 5,000 feet to our site. The quoted transportation rates from the companies that reviewed the project, increased the cost of gas beyond the breakeven mark for the company. Had the gas companies had access to special financing, tax abatements and accelerated depreciation, I am confident we could have secured the project says Jesse Roush, Executive Director of the SeOPA.

Jesse has experience in Right of Way acquisitions. With that said, this is another area we see can be productive moving forward with the Right of Way language within SC0484.

I feel that I offer a unique perspective of the Muskingum River Industrial Park, considering I sat on the Fort Frye Local School Board (2011-2019) when the AEP plant was decommissioned in 2015. When the AEP plant shut down in 2015 our school district lost over 10% of our entire budget. Our neighboring district, Wolf Creek Local also was impacted negatively as a result of this closure. Considering the tax abatement language within this bill, I'm familiar with what this means for each of our school districts. Each district has a Gas Fired Power Plant within its boundaries and have utilized tax abatements over the past 20 years.

As a Commissioner I fully support the EnergizeOhio amendment. This amendment will provide resources to revitalize that site along with others in Washington County. This site, with the needed infrastructure will not only have the potential to create jobs but will offer better sustainability for our school districts on that end of the county.

There are other parts of Washington County the Energize Ohio amendment will offer support. Recently, within the last 5 years in Belpre on Washington Blvd there was not enough gas pressure to support a Burger King being proposed. That was resolved by the natural gas supplier and the Burger King was built, but moving forward expansion of similar businesses will be an issue. Let's be clear and consider this, if we don't have enough natural gas for a dang Burger King, how are my communities going to compete for and attract industrial and manufacturing firms!

In Washington County, we have many large industries and chemical companies along the Ohio River. These firms employ many of our residents. I've heard

numerous times, in order to grow in our community these companies need access to more natural gas, without it they will be forced to grow elsewhere. I believe SC0484 can be a tool that helps these companies grow in Ohio.

Marietta Memorial Hospital, which is our largest employer (3400 employees) is starting to provide a nice footprint in the Belpre area as well. With expansions imminent, there is going to be a real need for housing. Obviously, developers seeking to provide good affordable housing will benefit from the EnergizeOhio amendment as well.

Washington County is seeking a “difference maker” when talking about Economic Development in a multitude of ways. For Washington County to have a choice to designate as an EnergizeOhio zone, we will be able to support not only our SeOPA but our industry along the Ohio and Muskingum rivers that’s been so vital to us over the years. This is why I support SC0484 and hope the members of the General Government Committee do their part to convert SC0484 into law.

Respectfully Yours,

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Charles Schilling, Washington County Commissioner