



Ben Vollrath, Logan County Chamber of Commerce President
100 S. Main Street
Bellefontaine, OH 43311

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

RE: Interested Party Testimony on HB 33 (SC0484)

May 8, 2023

Chairman Rulli, Vice Chairman Schuring, and Ranking Member DeMora

Thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on House Bill 33. My name is Ben Vollrath and I am President of the Logan County Chamber of Commerce located just 1-hour northwest of downtown Columbus along the growing US33 Smart Corridor. I serve as the economic development lead for our community as we look to attract new business and grow our existing business base. I am also fortunate to serve as a Board member for the Mid Ohio Development Exchange, which is the professional development organization serving the 11-county Columbus Region of economic developers. My background is in the utility industry having worked six years for Dayton Power & Light in community and economic development.

Between my time at the utility and now in local development, I have seen firsthand the importance of having prepared communities. The saying we often use in the Columbus Region is that "prepared communities win." Winning largely means retaining and attracting jobs that improve the quality of life and the prosperity of an area and its people. Preparation that paves the way for business expansions and new business attraction requires not just finding available land, implementing proper zoning, and fostering a community supportive of growth. Preparation largely hinges on infrastructure and having excess utility capacity. Roads, water, sewer, fiber, electric, and natural gas. Not just having them onsite but having excess capacity so new users can come and get up and running quickly.

In Logan County we have done significant amounts of preparation and now have three active industrial parks offering combined over 250 acres of land properly zoned for industrial development. These properties have roads into the park, water, sewer, fiber, electric, and natural gas lines all on site. For our two primary parks in the City of Bellefontaine there are over 2 million gallons/day of water and

sewer capacity available thanks to investments by our community. In one of the parks two 100,000 square foot speculative industrial buildings were constructed with support from JobsOhio. The issue now is natural gas. The industrial parks and buildings cannot support much more than warehousing or lite manufacturing because Logan County is significantly constrained by the maxed-out gas transmission line serving our area.

I have built a great relationship with our one of our natural gas distribution companies serving the area through all of this. We have an understanding on our process when JobsOhio or One Columbus sends out an RFI requesting potential local properties to be submitted for a site selectin process. I forward the RFI to the company noting the natural gas requirements and I ask if our industrial parks are capable of being submitted. The answer most of the time is an expected "no". We then file these "no serve" responses to build our case for needing additional gas capacity. We simply cannot compete for these projects. We are out of buttons to push and levers to pull that make a difference.

But with SC0484, we have renewed optimism. Our community would be excited to establish an EnergizeOhio Zone that could support our local gas utility company in building new infrastructure to solve our gas constraints. The gas distribution company has projected the solution for our community to be north of \$50 million and involve extending lines 20+ miles. With a project this size, SC0484 could be the necessary piece to push the project into reality. Providing property tax exemptions and assistance with right of way acquisition both move the needle for us. Without this amendment, we will continue to be a prepared community that loses. This amendment is a key tool in helping solve our gas constraints.

Thank you again for the opportunity lend my support to SC0484. I would welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Ben Vollrath
President
Logan County Chamber of Commerce