

Ohio House Energy Committee
Interested Party Testimony - House Bill 15
March 12, 2025

Chair Holmes, Vice-Chair Klopfenstein, Ranking Member Glassburn, and members of the committee, my name is Mimi Plevin-Foust, and I'm the Legislative Committee Chair of Faith Communities Together for a Sustainable Future (FaCT). We're a statewide coalition of faith communities and individuals educating and advocating for a just transition to renewable energies, sustainable practices, and policies to address climate change. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

FaCT supports HB15's proposed policies to undo the harms of HB6 and reduce costs for energy consumers, including the specific recommendations made by both the Ohio Environmental Council and the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel in their testimony to this committee on February 12th.

With that stated, we urge this committee to step back and recognize the extraordinary moment we face as Ohioans, Americans, and human beings on an increasingly destabilized planet due to the global heating caused by fossil fuel emissions. These emissions are still growing worldwide at levels never recorded in human history. We ask you to think of the child you care about the most in this world – your own child, grandchild, niece or nephew - and keep that child's future at the front of your decision-making process on this legislation and all other legislation going forward. Because if Ohio keeps favoring production of gas and other fossil fuels over cheaper, cleaner, readily available renewable energies like solar, wind and geothermal power, your favorite child on earth will not have a stable planet to grow old on. Neither will your young staffers and interns. Just look at latest analysis, charts, and predictions in the 'WMO State of the Climate 2024 Update' which you can read online.

Thanks in part to global heating, Ohio has experienced a historic drought within the past year which has harmed farmers statewide. That is why we also ask this committee to consider the billions of gallons (literally) of Ohio's fresh water resources that are used and contaminated by the process of hydraulic fracturing to extract gas in our state. Please Google "hidden inefficiencies environmental cost fracking ohio" to find an article from the FracTracker Alliance with outstanding charts and data about exactly how much water and other resources are being used up by hydraulic fracturing in Ohio.

For all these reasons and to ensure that Ohio can finally join the new energy economy creating jobs and prosperity in other states, we urge you to add stricter energy efficiency policies and further prioritize renewable energies like solar, wind, and geothermal* (with battery storage) in HB15 and all future legislation. (Please note that methane, the main

component of 'natural gas', heats the climate 80 times faster than carbon at every step of the extracting, transportation, and burning process.**)

Based on new revisions to HB15, FaCT's specific comments and recommendations follow:

Community Energy Pilot Program

FaCT strongly supports this proposed program which revives HB197 and hopes the program will prioritize community solar programs.

Regarding Virtual Net Metering and Meter Aggregation (SB 275)

SB275 was a bill to set up a virtual net metering program on distressed lands that was expected to pass during the lame duck session. Please add this bill to HB15 to help ensure the success of the Community Energy Pilot Program and future community energy programs.

Energy Efficiency for data centers, homes and businesses

- To right-size Ohio's energy needs and keep our grid resilient, HB15 should require all large energy users such as data centers to implement best practices for energy efficiency. Please consider this short article and downloadable 40-page report by RMI detailing the ways to power the data center boom with low carbon solutions and increase their energy efficiency:
<https://rmi.org/insight/powering-the-data-center-boom-with-low-carbon-solutions/>
- Add the volunteer energy efficiency programs from HB 79 which was expected to pass in the lame duck to HB15.

Legacy Generation Resource Fund OVEC Bailouts

FaCT strongly supports ending these bailouts, but recommends ending them immediately upon passing this law, not tying them to sunseting the electric security plans.

Solar Generation Fund

This money was collected for the purpose of supporting solar energy projects in Ohio. Please incorporate the Solar for Schools loan program that SB2 now creates from the \$53.7 million in this fund into HB15.

Siting, Setbacks and Approval Time Frames

- 45 days is nowhere near enough time to properly review an application to build a major electricity generating facility on a brownfield or private property owned by a large energy user. Many data centers and brownfields are located right in the middle of suburban residential and urban communities. Environmental, economic, and health impacts must be considered, and communities must have the right to comment and veto projects just as they can veto a solar or wind project now.

- Please create fair, equivalent standards for renewable energy projects and fossil fuel projects so they can all proceed through the Ohio Power Siting Board in a safe, yet timely manner.
- FaCT urges HB15 to restore the original 750-foot setback for wind turbines to make our state competitive with our neighbors. Wind energy is the cheapest form of energy available. Coupled with storage, it is very reliable. Wind projects provide millions in tax dollars to the counties where they are located.

*Ohio's many abandoned coal mines and other abandoned deep wells may be excellent sites for geothermal projects: <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-odnr/geologic-survey/energy-resources/geothermal-energy>

**Favoring renewable energy sources over methane gas extraction, transport and burning will avoid:

- Dangers of methane gas leaks and flares which speed climate heating 80 times more than carbon emissions,
- Polluting and using up scarce fresh water resources for fracking, especially considering the crop-threatening drought that Ohio has experienced in the past year or longer,
- Danger of radioactive, chemical-laden leaks from brine transport and storage into critical waterways and water tables,
- Danger of highly polluting, uncontrollable fires from fracking sites and brine injection wells;
- Increased global heating bringing more frequent, intense weather disasters and drought, and
- Increased lung disease, asthmas, cancers, and other health dangers to local communities, data center employees, executives, and other workers.

Thank you for your strongest consideration of these recommendations. Please contact us to answer any questions you may have.