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Committees

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Sharon A. Ray
State Representative

Good Afternoon Chairman Holmes, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Rader, and fellow members of the House Energy Committee. As Representative Hoops shared, HB303 bill has incorporated several changes that were suggested throughout many interested party meetings. We have phased in the program's implementation equally over four years and proportionally across the utilities by distribution territory.

Because private capital must be invested, we see this legislation as a free market solution to Ohio's all-of-the-above energy generation needs. Developers may not go back to the Public Utilities Commission and ask for rate recovery, should they make a bad business decision. There are also intentional consumer protections detailed in the bill to ensure Ohioans can engage in this new program with confidence.

Ohio has seen significant investment in manufacturing and supply chain elements. The Community Energy Pilot Program will continue to support those investments. Ohio currently imports a significant amount of its electricity, so implementing this pilot program will allow us to watch and learn in a measured approach how distributed generation can help modernize and add resiliency to the grid overall.

Community energy development is anticipated to spread across Ohio. Over half of our counties will see the benefits of these small-scale projects. Which translates into landowner lease payments, jobs for local contractors, and all the ancillary spending inherent from development projects.

These projects will be limited in size so the challenges we saw last fall with large utility scale projects are inherently addressed and will not face the same public opposition. All projects in the program must be permitted through the local permitting authority. Giving Township Trustees the ability to turn down community energy projects they don't feel are beneficial to their township.

I wanted to finish off by sharing five key benefits of Community Energy: cost stability and affordability, consumer choice and competition, economic empowerment of local stakeholders, strengthening the grid, and widespread accessibility. Each of these benefits affect Ohioans, from guaranteed bill-savings and supporting local economic growth to diversifying energy sources and giving consumers a choice that's beyond traditional energy options. The economic impact of Community Energy access not only creates \$490 million in local tax revenue but also \$5.6 billion in local economic investment. In allowing third parties to compete, we are unlocking the benefits of community energy that allow for a more thriving, vibrant market in Ohio with more choices, more competition, and more opportunities.

I look forward to continuing to work with members of the committee and interested parties as we work towards making Ohio the 22nd state to allow 3rd Party community energy development. Give Ohioans the freedom to save and the power to choose.

Thank you for your time and continued support of Community Energy, seen previously passed as part of the Energy Bill, HB15. We would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.