



***BEFORE THE HOUSE ENERGY COMMITTEE
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 303***

Chairman Holmes, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Rader, and members of the House Energy Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 303 (HB 303). My name is Kevin Shimp and I am an associate attorney at the law firm Dickinson Wright testifying on behalf of the Ohio Business Energy Partnership.

The Ohio Business Energy Partnership (OBEP), newly founded in 2024, is a business organization of large energy users with a mission to bolster the ability of Ohio companies to access clean energy in the Buckeye State through the power of competitive markets. Board members of the Ohio Business Energy Partnership include the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, Bath & Body Works, Ohio Environmental Council, and Greater Cleveland Partnership.

In our efforts to increase the supply of carbon free energy generation and maintain retail electric choices for businesses, OBEP supports House Bill 303 because community energy projects will support the development of more electric generation facilities. Authorizing the construction of these new local generation facilities that can utilize solar, wind, biomass, energy storage systems, and other fuel sources aligns with OBEP's policy priorities by removing barriers to in-state generation of clean energy, while also helping contain energy costs by bringing more generation on line.

A key benefit from establishing community energy programs as proposed by HB 303 is the ability to rapidly increase Ohio's generation capacity. Unlike utility-scale projects that may require years of complex siting and infrastructure buildout, community energy projects have a much shorter construction timeline. This accelerated deployment of new generation will create a greater supply of energy that will help the state meet our growing electric demand in the near term.

Enabling businesses to become subscribers to community energy projects is another important component of HB 303 because it will help smaller companies access carbon free generation without needing to make significant upfront capital investments. Instead, these smaller companies or subscribers can receive generation that utilizes carbon free energy (or their fuel source of choice) via a contract with the owner of a community energy facility and obtain credits on their electric bill for the generation the company receives from the facility.

HB 303 will similarly help contain energy costs for businesses and consumers alike because increasing the supply of energy acts as a natural market mechanism to help lower energy costs. Community energy projects authorized under the bill also strengthen consumer choice since House Bill 303 enables these projects to produce generation using a variety of different fuel sources, including many carbon free options.

In addition to the legislation's benefits for Ohio businesses and the state's energy grid, there are many consumer protections and opportunities for local input in House Bill 303. The bill requires community energy projects to guarantee savings for their subscribers and empowers township trustees to limit the geographic boundaries of proposed community energy projects, which ensures local elected leaders can shape the development of these projects. The bill also mandates community energy project developers hold public meetings where residents can deliver comments on the proposed facility.

In closing, the Ohio Business Energy Partnership urges your favorable consideration of House Bill 303 because it reduces barriers to in-state generation and helps address Ohio's increasing energy demands in a manner that boosts consumer choice and maintains local input in project development.