

Written Testimony in favor of House Bill 303

By Travis Irvine — Communications Director and Former Candidate for Governor, Libertarian Party of Ohio

Chairman Holmes, Vice-Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Rader and members of the House Energy Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written proponent testimony in favor of House Bill 303 (HB 303), a bill to establish a framework for a community solar energy and pilot program to encourage community solar development in Ohio. My name is Travis Irvine and I am the current Communications Director with the Libertarian Party of Ohio (LPO) as well as a former candidate for Governor, which means I'm proud to join this *tri*-partisan effort to make community energy a reality here in The Buckeye State. I want to thank all of the Republican and Democrat legislators who have brought HB 303 to this point, as well as the determined citizens who are part of this grassroots movement and have helped carry this effort from its humble beginnings to this historic moment. As a Libertarian, I'm encouraged by the bipartisan support this bill has, in addition to the free market, small government and pro-consumer elements it contains at its core. At a time when our state's electricity demands are growing — with PJM saying more energy will need to be readily available to meet the demand in the years ahead — HB 303 gives everyday Ohio citizens a way to both *increase* their access to cheaper local energy sources, while also *decreasing* their need for costly energy from the grid. This means HB 303 will simultaneously *increase* average Ohioans' access to more electricity options, while *decreasing* their energy bills at a time when it seems like prices for everything are constantly going up. This also means that my Republican friends can enjoy how HB 303 *increases* options for their constituents in the free market, while my Democrat friends can enjoy how HB 303 protects the environment and *decreases* consumers' reliance on fossil fuels. As a Libertarian, I appreciate how HB 303 makes decentralization a larger aspect of Ohio's competitive energy market, a true win-win-win for all Ohioans. In fact, from what I understand, the *ONLY* opposition to community energy comes from the same *big* energy companies who are anti-competition and have a history of seeking big government bailouts — paid for by ratepayers and taxpayers alike — whenever they can't seem to understand the trajectory of the free market and make poor business decisions. No matter how many campaign donations — *or* bribes — these companies may give to some members of this esteemed body, they can't stop the free market principles that are enshrined in HB 303 from eventually coming to fruition. Now is the time to make those happen. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony in favor of HB 303. This bill represents a significant step forward in making cheap, renewable energy in The Buckeye State affordable, equitable and accessible to all Ohioans in rural and urban areas alike — from Athens County down in Appalachia to Lake County up on Lake Erie — all while improving our economy and environment. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions and I encourage a YES vote on HB 303.

Travis Irvine

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