

House Energy Committee,

September 29, 2025

We at the Evangelical Environmental Network are writing to express our support for House Bill 303. Community energy programs can and will defend the health and lives of Ohio's children, and provide multiple benefits for Ohio families, the economy, and for the care of God's creation.

As evangelicals committed to defending the life and health of every child, we are pleased that HB 303 will increase the amount of clean, pollution-free energy coming onto the grid. This bill would allow us to provide clean air for Ohio's children through the use of solar panels which do not emit pollutants into the atmosphere that contribute to warming and cause health harms. A warmer climate results in increases in occurrences of Lyme disease, and air pollution from carbon-based energy is linked to asthma attacks, other respiratory issues, cancer, and more.

This bill will secure clean, renewable energy that any and all Ohioans can access no matter the barrier. Families who are renters or who live in areas that are overly shaded would finally be able to benefit from solar arrays. This bill would also allow lower and middle-income families to choose clean energy and save money on their energy bills. The pilot program aims to install 1,500 MW of capacity which is enough to power over 300,000 homes. Community energy would benefit all ratepayers by supplying extra energy to the grid during peak demand on hot days when prices are highest, lowering the overall energy burden of families across the state. Across the country, community energy programs in other states already save ratepayers between 5% and 20% on their bills. These savings would be crucial in Ohio, where in June 2025 residents saw a 26% increase on their electricity bills.

As evangelicals who are called to care for God's creation, we are pleased by the conservation benefits of this bill. The pilot program would provide 1,000 MW of general capacity, including 500 MW of which would be reserved for distressed sites and commercial rooftops. This would promote wise land use by promoting brownfield remediation through private, market-driven development of distressed sites, contributing to environmental cleanup.

This legislation will also unlock the benefits of a clean energy economy for the many Ohioans and their children who are currently at risk of being left behind. It will allow everyone to choose local, reliable, and lower-cost clean energy solutions regardless of income level or housing situation constraints. It also promises to help communities across the state that have been harmed by rising costs of living and local job loss and support farmers in protecting their land while generating much-needed additional income. The pilot program outlined in HB 303 offers significant economic benefits, such as thousands of family-sustaining careers, including those in the building trades, and \$490 million in local tax revenue for local governments and school districts, as estimated in a study from Ohio University.

The reality is that Ohio is falling behind other states in the necessary transition to renewable energy. While 24 other states and the District of Columbia have authorized community energy and begun reaping its benefits, Ohio has yet to act. HB 303 would help ratepayers, communities, and workers reap economic benefits while creating energy in ways that minimize the health impacts on the hearts, minds, and lungs of our children. The time to act is now. To defend the health and lives of our children, support Ohio families, and protect and revitalize God's creation, we urge you to support HB 303.

Thank you,

Rev. Dean Van Farowe
Ohio Outreach Coordinator
Evangelical Environmental Network