

Testimony by Mimi Plevin-Foust on House Bill 303

Board Member, Legislative Committee Chair, FaCT Ohio
(Faith Communities Together for a Sustainable Future)

House Energy Committee

October 1, 2025

Chairman Holmes, Vice-Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Rader, and members of the House Energy Committee, thank you for the chance to submit proponent testimony on HB 303, a bill to establish a community energy program and pilot program in Ohio.

My name is Mimi Plevin-Foust, 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.

We support HB 303 because the bill's policies align with FaCT's mission to empower communities and transition to cleaner energy sources that will protect clean air and water and improve Ohioans' health. We agree with Senator Romanchuk that HB 303/SB 231 will enable Ohio to build "a smarter, more resilient energy system that taps into our own resources and supports local communities. This pilot program will empower local decision-making, reduce our reliance on imported power, and position Ohio as a leader in energy innovation."

FaCT agrees with Representative Ray that HB 303 will bring "...more energy options for Ohioans as demand is at an all-time high. A pilot program like the one proposed would be a great way to bring value, more distributed generation, and energy security to our state."

HB 303, if enacted, would create a distributed generation pilot program that would allow for Ohio to secure in-state generation subject to local planning and zoning years ahead of the time frames for other generation sources, which could take years. Additionally, community energy stands to help all ratepayers by lowering energy bills, increasing customer choice, and spurring local economic growth and tax revenue.

A recent analysis completed by former Texas Public Utility Commissioner Karl R. Rábago shows that the costs of community solar legislation in Ohio currently being considered would be offset by the program's benefits from "avoided costs" alone, without including indirect benefits like reducing dependency on imported energy, economic development, and job creation that results from building a strong, locally based electricity generation sector.

Through passing HB 303, this committee can help Ohio join the many states benefitting from lower-cost, renewable energy. HB 303...

- Enhances Ohio's energy resiliency
- Promotes clean, renewable energy based on local needs;
- Creates local jobs in energy installation and maintenance;

- Turns idle or contaminated lands into assets that generate local tax revenue;
- Helps underserved communities in rural and urban areas;
- Protects consumers' finances and health, and
- Saves Ohioans money on their energy needs.

Across the nation, 19 states and the District of Columbia have already adopted policies enabling third-party community solar programs. Additionally, Microsoft, Google, Walmart, Starbucks, Rivian, Wendy's, and T-Mobile are just a few of the Fortune 500 companies that have signed agreements with community solar developers to invest in projects across the country. Companies and states across the nation recognize that, as they look to meet rising energy needs, community solar and distributed energy resources are answering the call.

FaCT urges this committee to pass HB 303 out of committee and do whatever you can to ensure it passes into law this year. Your children and constituents will thank you. I appreciate your time and consideration today.