



Ohio House Energy Committee

House Bill 303 Interested Party Testimony

Chairman Holmes, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Rader, and members of the House Energy Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony today on House Bill 303.

My name is Shayna Fritz, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Ohio Conservative Energy Forum, a nonprofit organization that advocates for market-driven, commonsense all-of-the-above energy solutions that strengthen reliability, protect ratepayers, and expand economic opportunity across Ohio.

First, I want to thank Representatives Ray and Hoops for their leadership on this bill. HB 303 represents an important step toward expanding access to community energy and allowing more Ohioans to participate in and benefit from our state's growing energy economy.

This bill aligns with our mission at OHCEF by encouraging innovation, competition, and consumer choice, 3 key principles for a fair and efficient energy market. It supports local investment and diversifies Ohio's energy portfolio by encouraging the use of solar, wind, biomass, natural gas, hydroelectric power, energy storage, and fuel cells for community energy projects.

That said, while we are largely supportive of HB 303, we are testifying today as an interested party because of one significant concern: the provision granting township trustees the authority to prohibit community energy projects.

As currently written, these smaller community facilities would not go through the Ohio Power Siting Board like utility-scale projects. Instead, they would be subject to local zoning approval. The current bill allows township trustees to adopt resolutions that could prohibit or restrict these projects, even if they meet all previously established zoning and regulatory standards.

We absolutely believe in local input, but this goes beyond that. The language effectively gives a local board of trustees the power to prohibit projects outright. We view this provision as an enablement of government overreach and an infringement on private property rights. Landowners who wish to lease or use their property for a compliant energy project should have the right to do so without facing arbitrary political barriers.

This type of authority also sends a negative signal to investors. When developers see that projects can be prohibited without clear, objective criteria, they often take their investment, and the associated jobs and tax revenue, elsewhere. For rural communities that could benefit from new economic activity, that is a lost opportunity.



We believe there is a better balance to be struck. Trustees must be part of the siting process, but their role should be structured around providing formal comments or recommendations within the local board of zoning review, guided by clear and objective criteria such as siting standards, visual impact, or infrastructure considerations. This approach ensures meaningful local engagement while maintaining zoning standards that are expected to be applied to all economic development projects without creating uncertainty that discourages investment or undermines property rights.

HB 303 is good policy that will help strengthen grid reliability, lower costs, and make Ohio more competitive in attracting new business and energy investment. We simply want to make sure that local governance complements, rather than constrains, those goals.

In short, let's preserve what's best about this bill: innovation, consumer choice, and economic growth, while ensuring the process remains fair, consistent, and supportive of Ohio's energy future.

Thank you again for your time and for the thoughtful work that's gone into this legislation. I appreciate the opportunity to testify and would be happy to answer any questions.