

**Opposition Testimony – Senate Bill 2**  
**March 12, 2025**  
**Ohio Senate Energy Committee**

Chair Chavez, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Senate Energy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to give Opposition testimony on Senate Bill 2, whose goal is to increase power generation and improve Ohio's electric grid. My name is Cathy Becker, and today I am testifying on my own behalf as a concerned citizen of Ohio.

**Legacy Generation Resource Rider and Solar Generation Fund**

First, I'd like to start with some good things in SB 2. SB 2 would repeal both the Legacy Generation Resource Rider, through which Ohioans have paid \$670 million to bail out two aging Ohio Valley Electric Corporation (OVEC) coal plants, as well as the Solar Generation Fund, through which Ohioans have paid \$60 million, of which only \$10 million has actually been spent to help build solar plants in Ohio.

As the bill currently stands, it would transfer the remaining solar fund to a new Solar for Schools program. I strongly support this. These funds were collected for the purpose of enabling solar generation, and that's exactly what the Solar for Schools program would do. It would be a loan that would be paid back, and then the schools would save money on their energy bills, which could be put back into educational expenses.

A school district in Batesville, Arkansas, provides a great example. By putting solar on schools, they cut energy costs in half. This saved enough to raise teacher salaries by up to \$15,000 per year, all while improving educational quality and lowering carbon pollution.

Regarding the Legacy Generation coal bailouts, repealing this is a big step forward for Ohio. It could be even better if the bailouts ended immediately upon passage of the bill, and were not tied to utilities' electric security plans, many of which will take several years to sunset.

**Ohio Power Siting Board Process**

Of great concern to me – and many others who would be concerned if they were aware of what's in SB 2 – are the stipulations regarding the Ohio Power Siting Board process.

Currently, the OPSB has a long approval process that includes thousands of pages in an application, several public hearings, and months of public comments on a proposed project. The entire process takes many months and usually years.

Senate Bill 2 would shorten this process to 120 days for most applications, and only 45 days – just six weeks – for two types of applications:

- An electric generating plant, transmission line, or gas pipeline proposed in a priority investment area, defined as a designated brownfield or former coal mine
- A major utility facility, defined as 50 MW or more, proposed for private property owned by applicant – presumably a large energy user such as a data center

There is no stipulation in SB 2 for where the land owned by the applicant would need to be located – so it could be anywhere. This is what tips me into the opposition category.

My husband and I recently moved to a new build subdivision in Hilliard – basically my dream house that we funded with a small inheritance and the sale of our previous home. What we didn't know when we signed the paperwork three years ago was that a series of Amazon data centers were planned to go in across the street.

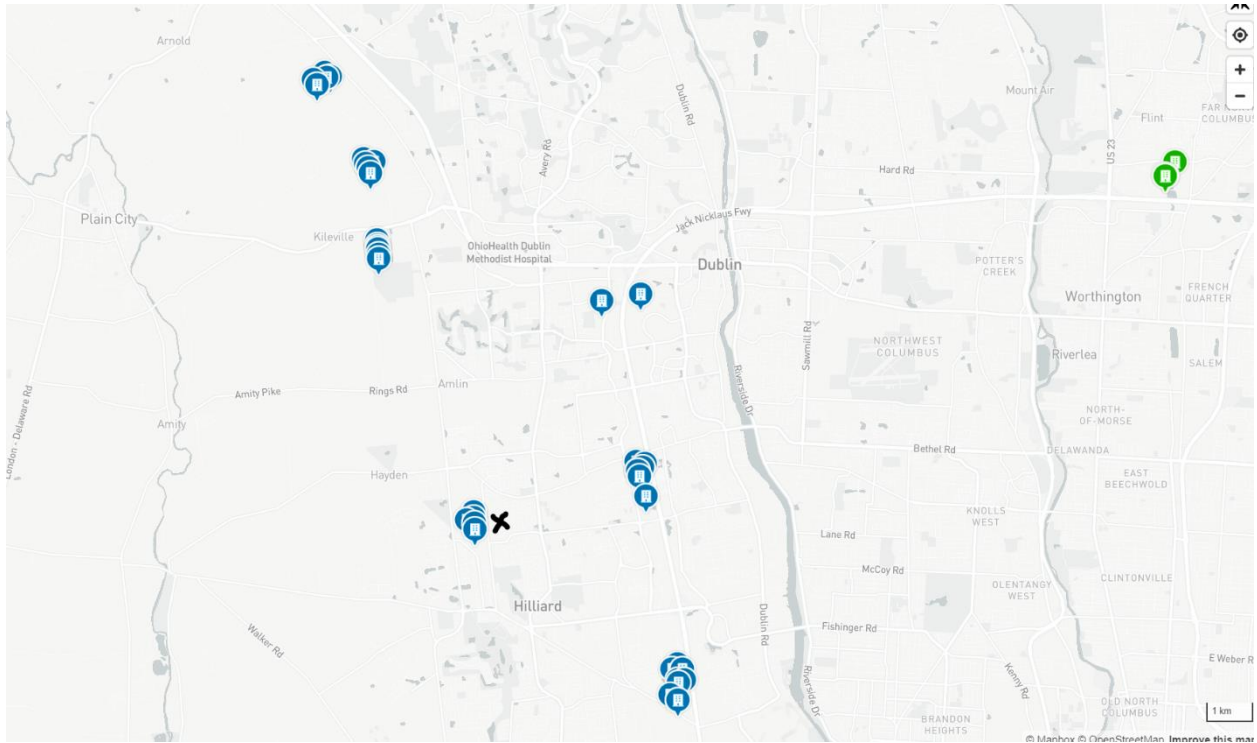
Having a data center as a neighbor is not by itself a concern. What is of great concern is if that data center is allowed to build a major gas plant on property next door with only a six-week approval process.

Here's a photo of the Amazon data centers taken from my driveway. The dumpster you see in the middle is there because they are still building new homes on my street.

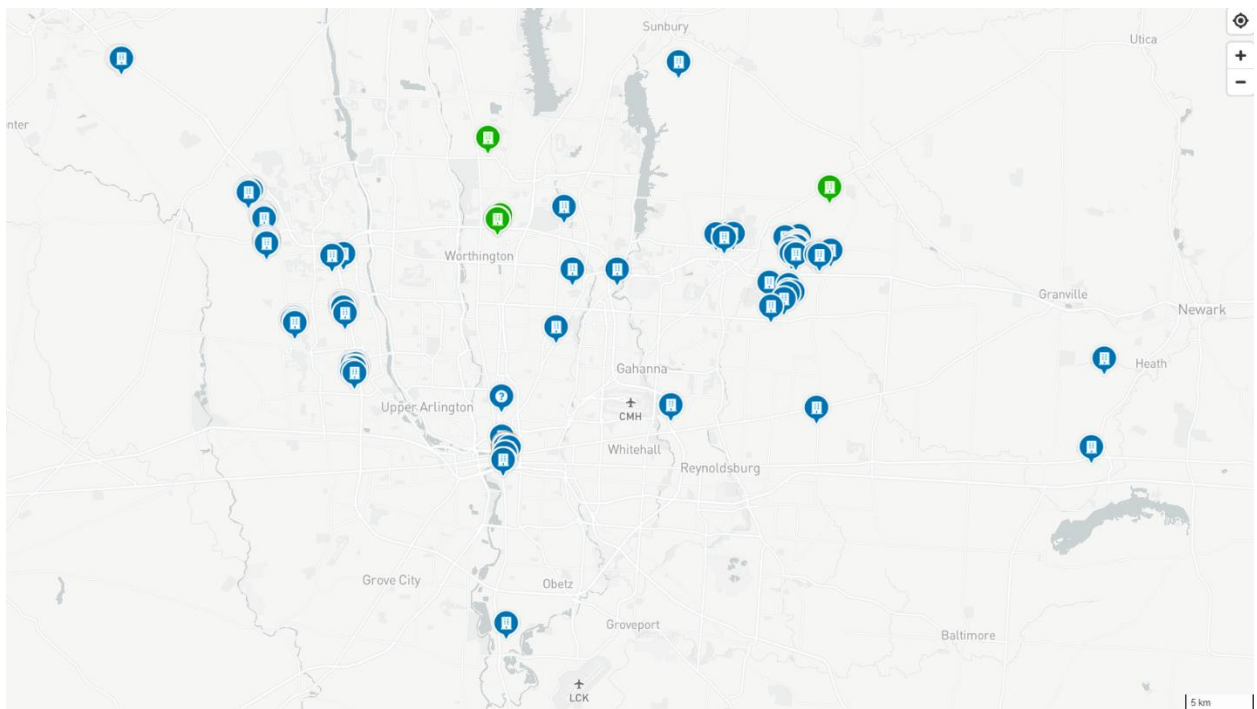


I am by far not the only person affected. There are 176 data centers in all of Ohio – of those, 108 are in Central Ohio. Most of them are in residential areas like mine.

Here's a map of the data centers in northwest Franklin County where I live – the location of my house is marked with an X.



Here are the data centers in all of Central Ohio – many if not most are in residential areas. This means hundreds of thousands of people could end up with a gas plant next door approved in just six weeks – and they have no idea this is even being discussed.



You can check this map out for yourself at <https://www.datacentermap.com/usa/ohio/>

The fact that a major utility facility could be fast-tracked through a 45-day process at the Ohio Power Siting Board is very concerning. That is not enough time to educate residents about what is at stake, get public comments, or do an environmental impact assessment.

### **Give local governments say over gas plants**

SB 2 must provide for the safety and livability of residential areas where data centers are located. To rush through approval of any major utility facility -- especially a tax-exempted gas plant-- in the middle of homes and small businesses is just not good governance.

At the very least, local government officials need to be involved. In 2021, the legislature passed Senate Bill 52, which allows local cities, counties, and townships to ban solar and wind projects, but not oil and gas projects. At least 24 counties have done so. This is just one example of the gross inequity in Ohio law between renewable energy and fossil fuels.

If you are going to allow local officials to ban solar and wind projects, then it's only fair to allow them to veto gas plants, especially in residential areas. An amendment allowing local governments to prohibit gas plants no matter who owns them should be added to SB 2.

### **Energy efficiency, renewable energy**

You may have read recent reports that China is developing AI technology that is significantly more energy efficient than American AI models. I do not think Ohio can legislate that data centers use Chinese technology, but you could require them to adopt best practices for energy efficiency. Research from [Duke University](#) finds that [even small tweaks](#), such as limiting power drawn from the grid to 90% for one day per year, could unlock 76 gigawatts of capacity – equal to 10% of peak demand in the entire United States.

Data centers can also be powered reliably with renewable energy coupled with battery storage, [according to RMI](#), the nation's premier sustainable energy research institute. Instead of putting gas plants on already distressed land, we could build community solar and virtual net metering for business use in these priority investment areas. This clean energy would lower electricity bills for individuals and businesses across Ohio – without the need for fracking our beautiful state parks, wildlife areas, and public lands.

Public comments on nominations to frack public lands show the vast majority of Ohioans are opposed. In fact, of 923 comments submitted on the last four nominations to frack Salt Fork State Park, Valley Run Wildlife Area, Egypt Valley Wildlife Area, and Jockey Hollow Wildlife Area, only ONE comment was in support. One out of 923 comments. That's 1/10<sup>th</sup> of 1 percent. 99.9% of comments were opposed to fracking our parks and wildlife areas. Legislators should listen to the citizens of Ohio who have made their preferences clear.

This concludes my testimony on SB 2. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I can try to answer any questions.