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### SB 320 Testimony

Good afternoon, Chair Balderson, Vice Chair Jones, and Ranking Member Gentile, as well as esteemed members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee today. My name is Sarah Conley-Ballew, Executive Director of UpGrade Ohio. Our organization, based in Athens County, connects people with local resources to reduce energy use and to access renewable energy solutions, driving demand for sustainable energy development for Appalachian Ohio. We believe that policy reform is a critical step in a smart energy transition, and that Senate Bill 320 doesn't go far enough to support that transition in a real way.

UpGrade Ohio's work is focused on serving Appalachian Ohio, a coal-rich region chronically disaffected by the impacts of state energy policies that allow industry to take much more than it gives back. The boom and bust cycle of energy extraction has historically hit hardest in Southeast Ohio, where formerly bustling communities now stand beaten, blighted, and broken. Towns and villages across Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Morgan and Vinton Counties, built by iron workers and coal miners over many generations, fueled the America we know today. When the U.S. needed domestic energy production to build cities from coast to coast, it was the Appalachian people who answered the country's call, at the expense of their own clean water supply, fresh air and fertile soil. And this is not a story set in past tense. The growing demand for natural gas has resulted in the same short term development across the Appalachian region - hotels to house out-of-state drilling operators are sprouting up like dandelions - and we all know what will happen in a few short years when the gas industry leaves.

There has to be turning point, a concerted effort by policymakers and industry alike to break the extraction cycle and once and for all, providing Appalachian Ohio an alternative path towards economic development centered around clean energy. This begins with forward-looking energy policy that undergirds renewable energy development, attracting a key growth industry to the state. According to the US Energy Information Administration, Renewable energy production will grow faster than any other power source through 2040.<sup>1</sup> Now is the time to roll out the welcome mat if we want Ohio to be competitive in this marketplace.

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<sup>1</sup>Administration, U. E. (2016, 09 10). *Statistics & Analysis*. Retrieved from US Department of Energy: <http://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/index.cfm>

Southeastern Ohio is particularly well suited for renewable energy development, with favorable geography for utility scale solar in the sunniest part of the state. There is potential for significant growth in the manufacturing sector in Southeast Ohio, with existing industrial sites primed for re-development. From panel manufacturing to utility scale solar installation – there is huge development potential. Shouldn't we set state renewable energy standards that attracts investment to a chronically underserved region?

To put this story in a national context: solar energy just overtook oil and natural gas extraction in the number of U.S. jobs for the first time this year while solar employment grew 12 times faster than overall job creation<sup>2</sup>. If you search for the fastest growing job in the country, you'll find the term 'wind turbine technician' at the top of the results<sup>3</sup> which was spurred by an increase in off-shore wind (not drilling) development - reaching unprecedented levels of investment in the last few months. To quote a recent Bloomberg News article, "Even without the Clean Power Plan, Bloomberg New Energy Finance forecasts that wind and solar energy will grow 33 percent over the next two years, adding 40 gigawatts [to the grid]. A lot of that will be driven by state, rather than federal, policies."<sup>4</sup>

These figures were made possible by state policy initiatives and the falling cost of renewable technology, but more importantly, by the people and communities across the county that have driven demand for cleaner energy across the national landscape.

With such potential on the horizon, now is not the time to put the brakes on renewable energy standards – it's time to hit the gas. This is the true 'Appalachian moment' - pregnant with potential for the development of a bold strategy that sustains the region long term. It's time for Ohioans to drop party lines and look ahead to a future that helps everyone. This project, and many others in Ohio will deliver a sustainable clean energy future for us all.

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<sup>2</sup> Bloomberg. (2016). *Clean-Energy Jobs Surpass Oil Drilling for First Time in U.S.* Retrieved from Bloomberg News: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-05-25/clean-energy-jobs-surpass-oil-drilling-for-first-time-in-u-s>

<sup>3</sup> Link, M. (2016, November 11). *Marine Link*. Retrieved from Offshore Wind: Renewed Interest in Investment: <http://www.marinelink.com/news/investment-interest418152>

<sup>4</sup> Bloomberg. (2016, November 22). *Bloomberg News*. Retrieved from Economics to Keep Wind and Solar Energy Thriving With Trump: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-11-23/economics-will-keep-wind-and-solar-energy-thriving-under-trump>

