

Abby Watson, Government Affairs Manager, Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy

Interested Party Testimony on Substitute House Bill 49

Senate Finance Committee

Chairman Scott Oeslager

Tuesday, June 6, 2017

Chairman Oeslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell, and Members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee- thank you for the opportunity to testify today as an interested party to Substitute House Bill 49. My name is Abby Watson and I manage Government Affairs for Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy, the newly merged entity of two world-class wind turbine manufacturers.

Siemens Gamesa is a utility-scale wind turbine manufacturer. The newly combined business employs 27,000 people worldwide, with a total installed capacity of 75 GW in over 90 countries on five continents. With the commissioning of the Paulding III Wind Farm completed at the end of 2016, there are now over 400 MWs of Gamesa-brand turbines in Ohio.

When Siemens Gamesa supplies turbines to a wind farm in Ohio, we help support and improve the critical infrastructure that also supports many of Ohio's most important industries. For example, with the recently-completed 100 MW Paulding III Wind Farm, Gamesa spent about \$3.2 million in Ohio on ports, rail transport, law enforcement escorts, utility line lifts and other transportation and logistics needs. The dozens of transportation employees, as well as the contractors for civil works and turbine construction, all required local lodgings, local meals, and other local goods and services. In addition, the wind industry provides exactly the kind of high-quality jobs that Ohio needs – good, skilled jobs in rural districts that pay well and provide benefits to workers with or without a college education. A wind farm continues to benefit the local community long after the construction phase through payments to local landowners, communities, and school districts.

The Ohio General Assembly passed renewable energy and energy standards in 2008 by a near unanimous vote. Since their inception, these standards have helped Ohio's renewable portfolio grow from virtually zero to 2.5% of Ohio's energy generation. Later, HB 487 established two setback requirements for wind development: one from a property line and one from a habitable structure. The property line setback was 1.1 times the height of the turbine from its base to vertical blade tip (approximately 540 feet). The habitable structure setback was 750 feet plus blade length (approximately 925 feet). The habitable structure setback was increased in May 2012 to 1125 feet plus blade length, or approximately 1300 feet. It is important to note that these are statutory *minimums*, and that the Ohio Power Siting Board has the ability to increase them on a turbine-by-turbine basis for any given project. For example, the average habitable structure setback for Blue Creek Wind Farm, which was constructed with Gamesa turbines and supplies energy to the Ohio State University, is over 1600 feet.

Then came HB 483, which moved the goalposts in 2014. When the change was proposed mere hours before the floor vote on the bill, with no opportunity for public comment or testimony or any demonstrated need for change, the people of Ohio were sold short. HB 483 simply made the property line setback the

same as the habitable structure setback, increasing the distance more than 2.5 times, without any scientific justification or community input.

Not a single application for a wind farm has been made since the effective date of HB 483. The existing setback regulation makes development in Ohio untenable, and developers will choose to move forward with projects in other states.

However, opportunity remains. Through 2020, the wind industry will experience a tremendous boom of activity as the federal tax credit phases out over that period. If Ohio modifies existing law to take advantage of that opportunity, the Buckeye State can help position itself to attract some of the biggest employers in the US who have made a commitment to renewable energy a guiding force in siting new facilities.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that the committee support any amendment that restores the wind setback to pre-2014 levels.

I appreciate your time and consideration today. I welcome any questions the committee may have.