



**State Representative Jay Edwards
Ohio's 94th House District**

Chairman Stephens, Vice Chairman Stewart and Ranking Member Weinstein, thank you for the opportunity today to bring before the committee House Bill 271, which would create the Natural Gas Infrastructure Development Program.

This bill is about investing in Ohio infrastructure, supporting Ohio jobs and improving the development of one of Ohio's great natural resources, our abundant supply of natural gas.

A recent study by Cleveland State University revealed that shale-related investment in Ohio totaled an estimated \$83.3 billion from 2011 through June 2019. Additionally, there are over 180,000 Ohioans working in both core and ancillary shale related jobs. This is due to Ohio being awash in low cost natural gas.

Unfortunately, similar to broadband, vast geographical areas of Ohio lack access to natural gas delivery capabilities required to meet current and expected demand. What does this mean? It means Ohio communities are unable to attract and retain jobs due to limited availability of natural gas – or the lack of it altogether. It means customer choices are reduced – which as a result means more expensive options to heat homes or businesses.

But we have the ability to fill the gap, and support Ohio jobs and Ohio's economy. That's what this bill is about.

In order to increase the market for natural gas in Ohio, this legislation proposes a grant and loan program based at the Ohio Public Works Commission, in consultation with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, to coordinate and expand access to natural gas. It would be funded by excess revenue remaining in the Oil and Gas Well fund at the end of a fiscal year, and/or future appropriations made by the General Assembly. Businesses, nonprofit organizations, and local governments would be eligible to apply for the funding.

The Ohio Public Works Commission would adopt rules for running the program, including criteria for prioritizing the awarding of loans and grants. Those criteria would include the projected number of customers that would be provided access or increased access to natural gas service, potential economic impacts, and the impact the proposed investment might have on natural gas service reliability.

House Bill 271 is a straight forward, common sense measure that supports jobs, our economy and Ohio consumers.

I ask for your support for House Bill 271 and am happy to answer any questions you may have.