

Testimony of Bill Frankart
Seneca County, Ohio
In support of HB-118
Ohio House Public Utilities Committee
March 9, 2021

Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, ranking member Smith, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to write as a proponent of HB-118. My name is Bill Frankart and I am a Township Trustee for Adams township in Seneca County Ohio. I am also a landowner and farm about 5000 acres in the area. My remarks will address the need for local citizens to have direct and meaningful input into the siting of wind projects.

Soon after the plans for the Republic Wind project (one of at least 5 projects in the Seneca County area) were released, my phone began ringing off the hook with township residents expressing various concerns over the transformation of our township. Our trustee meetings went from the normal small handful of people to uneasy overflowing crowds.

As a representative of all the residents, I have to consider the issue from both sides. I recognized the rights of landowners to lease their property to the wind company but I also have to represent all those who will be affected by the huge change a wind project brings with it. The list of concerns I heard about is long but there are some that will have genuinely serious safety and financial consequences.

One of the concerns is property valuations. It has always been the case that a landowner could sell off some woods or a few acres with road frontage for a high price to someone wanting to build a home and move to the country. Our township is dotted with many such residences. But if several dozen 600' tall turbines are built nearby, the concern is that no one will want to build in the area anymore and the extra value of such acres with road frontage, usually double the value of regular farm ground, will disappear.

Wind development will also affect the value of homes already built since many will be within a mile or so of a turbine. The wind company has presented us with studies to convince us this property devaluation will not occur. But the vast majority of homes in their studies are farther from wind turbines than any home in Adams township will be, so we remain unconvinced.

Another concern of many area farmers is how the turbines will affect aerial application of chemicals onto fields. This has become especially apparent with the extremely wet springs we have experienced and the difficulty that brings accessing fields with ground

equipment. Aerial applicators have told me that, with such tall wind turbines in the area, field applications by plane will become much more difficult. Some fields may not even be accessible to aerial application, not because there is a turbine on the farm, but because there are turbines on a neighbor's farm. All applications near turbines will be more expensive because of increased safety issues and difficulty in making turns by the planes.

A further, and even more important, safety issue bringing concerns is accessibility by Life Flight air ambulances. Our township is several miles from the nearest hospitals and over the years many patients and accident victims have been transported out by air, usually to hospitals in Toledo. The manager of our county airport (a life-long pilot himself) has said that this is a very legitimate concern and will bring life threatening delays in some cases as patients will have to be transported by ground ambulance to a location where the helicopter can land safely. With so many wind projects being developed in the Seneca County area this could be quite a distance.

As a township trustee I have heard the concerns of my citizens and have come to believe that they should have real input into whether such a huge transformation should be taking place. The referendum opportunity HB118 offers would gather a true consensus as to whether it should happen. Sharp divisions have occurred among the residents of my township. If it becomes absolutely clear that a majority of people want, or do not want the transformation, then it will go a long way towards the acceptance of the eventual outcome.

It has become clear to me as a local public official that the opportunity for a referendum on wind projects is sorely needed to diffuse the resentment that has developed from the state and wind companies forcing wind projects into our area, overriding our well planned local zoning, and depriving our citizens of their right to decide the future of their own community. Wind projects are too big and too imposing to allow construction without affected residents having a true voice in the matter. And, should a wind project be welcomed in, it is imperative that it be built with sufficient setbacks to protect the safety of neighboring property during thunderstorms.

Thank you.

Bill Frankart
Adams Township Trustee
Seneca County OH