



House Public Utilities Committee  
Opponent Testimony on HB 118  
Testimony of Marnie Urso  
Senior Policy Director, Audubon Great Lakes

March 23, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today in opposition to HB 118 on behalf of Audubon’s more than 54,000 members in Ohio. I am Marnie Urso, the Senior Policy Director for Audubon Great Lakes which is a regional office of the National Audubon Society.

Ohio harbors some of the most important places of any Midwestern state for birds – our biodiversity plays an integral role in supporting over 400 species, either by being on their migratory path or by providing breeding habitat. From the prairies in the west, to unglaciated Appalachian plateaus to the south and east, and our great Lake Erie in the north—our state is critical to the health and vitality of birds and wildlife. In addition to being important for the quality of life for Ohioans, birds are important pollinators for our agriculture industry and birds support local business.

Birds also tell us that we must take action to combat climate change. For decades, climate change has been one of our greatest conservation challenges and has become one of the leading threats to birds and other wildlife in Ohio. The National Audubon Society’s [Survival by Degrees: 389 Birds Species on the Brink](#) has found that two-thirds of North American birds are at risk from climate change. Many of these species are currently threatened by other factors, such as habitat loss, while others are species we previously considered secure but could face significant shifts in their ranges as a result of climate change.

Now, more than ever, we have a responsibility to move forward and face this urgent threat head on by protecting the places that birds need to thrive and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Audubon strongly supports renewable energy – including solar, wind, and geothermal power – that is properly sited in ways that avoid, minimize, and mitigate negative impacts on birds and other wildlife. Audubon opposes HB 118 because it puts a clean energy future in Ohio at risk.

HB 118 subjects renewable energy projects to a new layer of government regulation in addition to the state process, including a “township-by-township” referenda not applied to any other energy source. All non-renewable energy sources pose serious health and/or safety risks—the fact that these energy sources are not part of the bill shows that this is not a good faith effort at sound policy, but is aimed at hurting a specific industry. This misguided policy puts an obstacle

in front of solar or wind power companies that is not placed before other private employers in Ohio and will essentially acts as a moratorium on future renewable energy projects in this state. Renewable energy is a vital component to protecting Ohio's birds and wildlife from the threat of climate change and to ensuring all Ohioans have access to safe and affordable energy. Audubon Great Lakes urges this committee and members of the General Assembly to take this opportunity to lead on energy policy, not put the state in reverse - HB 118 leads us in the wrong direction. I appreciate your time and consideration.

***Audubon Great Lakes** is a regional office of Audubon. The National Audubon Society protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow. Audubon works throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation. State programs, nature centers, chapters, and partners give Audubon an unparalleled wingspan that reaches millions of people each year to inform, inspire, and unite diverse communities in conservation action. A nonprofit conservation organization since 1905, Audubon believes in a world in which people and wildlife thrive.*