

House Public Utilities Committee
House Bill 118
Opposition Testimony
March 23, 2021

Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, Ranking Members Smith and members of the committee, I am submitting opposition testimony for House Bill 118.

My name is Rae Neal and I am a healthcare professional and care deeply for the health and safety of our community. The Birch Solar farm is an opportunity for our community to produce emission free, clean energy—and do our part to protect public health.

There are people saying that solar panels will lead to water quality issues through leaching of chemicals. This is, in fact, false. Life cycle impact studies prove that metals do not leach from solar modules into our environment. Solar is one of the most sustainable

In fact, the 1,400 acres that the solar farm will sit on will mean that those acres will be preserved from pesticides and fertilizer in a region of our state that has seen heavy impacts from agricultural run-off into our tributaries, lakes, and rivers. The solar farm gives this land time to rest, regenerate, and build back better soil profiles for years to come.

The Birch Solar project is low laying, emissions free, and the pollinator planting and proposed sheep farm will add to biodiversity.

There are also some who have blamed the Texas power outage on clean energy. Lightsource bp, the same company building Birch Solar, has a solar farm in Lamar County, and has continued to generate electricity throughout the recent storms in Texas. Even under cloudy skies due to the storms, the project is generating up to 80% of full capacity.

Allen and Auglaize counties deserve a clean energy future. I ask this committee to oppose Senate Bill 52.