

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

Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, and Ranking Member Kent, thank you for the opportunity to submit opposition testimony on House Bill 118. My name is Chip Kepford and I have a farm in Marion, Ohio.

I have spent my entire life working hard to provide for my family and leave a legacy for my children and my community. Working the land is hard and uncertain. Will we have floods, drought, unstable markets? Farming is a business and when an opportunity arises that can help sustain the farm and my family--I am going to take a real hard look at that.

There were times over the years when it was hard to get by. My neighbors never asked to help when I almost lost the farm. But now that I want to be a part of a solar project, everyone has something to say. No one asked where my corn and beans were going, but now that I am a part of a solar project, everyone wants to know where the energy goes. The truth is, many Ohio farmers are growing corn and beans and other commodities for families in other countries. We are growing beans that will be shipped to China. But the solar produced on my farm will go right into the grid and will be used closest to where the energy needs are--that means energy produced for Ohioans and Americans.

I have witnessed the power and money from big oil attempt to destroy the ethanol industry for more than a decade now. Our family has provided easements for gas and oil pipelines, high voltage electricity transmission, basic electric transmission, fiber optic communications and even miles of the busiest rail line in the state of Ohio. All for over 70 years with ZERO compensation!! There has been no public concern about what we as landowners have put up with for seven decades. Why now?

Farm technology is changing every day. We are learning new techniques and methods. Same goes for energy. So here we are, changing how energy looks, and allowing the farmer to be a part of this new energy system. And my family will not lose control of the farm. We lease our land for energy production--the same that many people lease their land for food and feed.

We didn't jump into this without research, study, and contemplation. I am doing what is best for my family, my land, and my community. The enormous financial benefit this solar farm will bring to our schools and communities is by far and away more substantial than what my land will give under CAUV.

I have followed the rules and laws of Ohio to produce energy on my land. And now people want to take this opportunity from me and many other law abiding farmers. I encourage the members of the committee and the General Assembly to reject this bill.