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Committee on Armed Services
and Veterans Affairs

Laura Lanese

**State Representative 23rd Ohio House District
House State and Local Government Committee: HB 450**

Chair Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the House Public Utilities Committee, thank you for allowing me and Representative Baldrige to provide sponsor testimony in support of HB450, the Community Solar bill. Community solar is a purchasing program for multiple customers, which allows for the benefits of solar energy within a defined geographic area. It fills the gap between large-scale solar fields and much smaller rooftop solar programs. Many Ohio consumers and businesses would like to utilize solar power, but either do not have access to large scale solar or have found that rooftop solar is too costly or inaccessible to them. Community solar bridges that gap.

Under HB 450, community solar projects must follow certain guidelines. I will highlight a few of the major components. The projects must have at least three subscribers, a nameplate or full load capacity of 10 or fewer MWs at the point of interconnection, and they may not be under the control of an EDU but may be under control of an affiliate. Our bill offers the opportunity to put projects on distressed sites where they may be eligible for tax credits. Also, the PUCO may certify up to 2,000 MWs with an additional 1,000 MWs for distressed sites. Finally, the PUCO will promulgate rules for the implementation of this program.

Community solar provides numerous benefits to Ohio and our constituents. In this discussion, I will highlight seven reasons to support community solar. These reasons are 1) the positive impact on electricity generation costs; 2) the attraction of businesses and therefore jobs to the state; 3) the partial fulfillment of consumer demand for renewable energy; 4) the increase in wages and employment in the green energy job market; 5) the environmental impact and subsequent health care cost reductions and quality of life improvements; 6) the national security enhancement of our grid; and finally 7) the economic impact on distressed sites in the state.

The first reason to support community solar legislation is that it helps decrease the cost of electricity for our ratepayers. It's a simple matter of the law of supply and demand. If we increase supply while holding demand constant, prices will go down. Even if demand goes up, as it likely will, having access to more electricity generation sources will only help consumers stave off price increases. Energy experts are warning us that this winter will be especially costly for homeowners with their heating bills. With your help, we can be prepared for future heating bill price increases by diversifying and enlarging our energy supply with cost efficient generation. The more production from diverse sources the greater the protection we have from power outages as well, especially from sources we're growing within the state.

The second reason to support community solar is that it responds to the growing demand for renewable energy as espoused by many companies who want to relocate to states with greater access to renewable power. Energy intensive companies like Google, Facebook, and Amazon are well known for their thirst for renewable energy but many smaller companies want to participate as well. We know that Proctor and Gamble in Cincinnati wants to purchase 100% renewable power by 2030. As does Dannon Yogurt in Minster, Owens Corning in Toledo, Honeywell in Mason, and Trinity Health in Steubenville. I can provide you a list of the dozens and dozens of large and small Ohio businesses who are working nonstop to build their renewable portfolio. In addition to helping our Ohio-based businesses reach their renewable

energy goals, we know that as the competition for job creation grows among states, having access to renewable energy through a smaller solar footprint could help Ohio become even more desirable in site selection by small and large employers from across the country and the globe.

The third reason to support community solar is that just as we see a very large demand for renewable energy from the business community, we also know that our constituents are asking us to support renewable energy options for them. A George Mason University poll showed that the majority of Ohio voters favored renewable energy. A poll by the Ohio Conservative Energy Forum revealed that two thirds of Ohio conservatives believe that half of our energy supply should come from renewable energy. Community solar enables many of these consumers to have access to renewable energy without the added expense of rooftop solar or having to move to a building with access.

The fourth reason to support community solar is that it is a job creator in the production of green energy jobs. Our community colleges and universities are training future employees for the green energy market because it's an in-demand field in many states, including Ohio. Ohio is fortunate to be the home of the country's largest producer of PV modules in the Western Hemisphere: First Solar. In fact, just a couple of months ago we celebrated a major groundbreaking on a new First Solar manufacturing facility in Perrysburg, Ohio. This one project has a capital investment of \$400 million and will have a payroll that generates \$40 million annually. First Solar estimates that they have invested \$3 billion in Ohio since their start. There aren't many companies that can say that. These high paying, green energy jobs should be embraced by this state and our community solar bill will go a long way in sending that message.

The fifth benefit that community solar offers is cleaner air, which not only provides for better health outcomes and quality of living but also results in huge cost savings in health care. It is estimated that fossil fuels cost the US nearly \$120 billion in health care costs and contributes to four out of five of the leading causes of deaths.

The sixth benefit and reason to vote for community solar is that it diversifies our electricity supply and thereby enhances our national security. In 2007, President George W. Bush signed into law the "Energy Policy of the Department of Defense," which acknowledged the benefits of renewable energy and called on the Defense Department to obtain 25 percent of its electricity from renewable power by 2025. Likewise, LTG Richard Zilmer, a retired three-star Marine Corps general and Iraq war veteran, has been using his retirement years to sound the alarm on the need to switch to renewable energy for a variety of national security reasons. He noted in an interview that "Companies are focused on renewable energy sources like solar and wind energy – for the simple reason that renewable energy is not only better for the environment than traditional sources, but is better for the security of our nation, and increasingly a better choice economically." Like it or not the race for renewable energy sources is reshaping international politics. China currently has twice the solar production of the United States. The world energy scene is changing whether we like it or not. Ohio should not be left behind in our contribution to helping the US become a leader in this area. We have seen how fossil fuels have been at the forefront of our geopolitical conflicts the last fifty years and most experts acknowledge that having access to renewable energy in the next fifty years could be a major factor in many future hostilities. That is why China is taking a lead in this area. Last year alone China installed a record 120 GW of renewable power more than twice the amount from the previous year. China is also bankrolling renewable energy projects across the globe from Kenya to Vietnam to Australia. More than one hundred years ago, Ohio experienced a large economic boom in large part due to its lead in the Industrial Revolution and the likes of J.D. Rockefeller and Standard Oil who dominated the oil industry and helped put Cleveland and Ohio on strong footing heading into the twentieth century.

And for the seventh and final reason, because our community solar bill provides for an extra 1,000 MWs of power to come from distressed sites HB 450 gives us the opportunity to turn lemons into lemonade. Many of us have distressed sites in our districts, be they coal ash ponds or discarded landfills sitting

empty, void of economic use, and often-unsightly barriers to development. Just down the road on I-71 as your coming to Columbus from the south sits a former landfill that was closed decades ago. An attempt was made to turn it into a golf course, but that was short lived. Today, a proposed larger scale utility project is being built by the solid waste district in central Ohio. When the facility is operational it will be one of the largest distressed site solar fields in the country and will be able to power 5,000 homes. It is time for us to put these ugly, nonproductive distressed sites back into the economy and help generate more electricity for our grid.

I hope these seven reasons are enough to convince you of the many benefits of HB 450 and community solar. It addresses this body's concern with large-scale solar projects, but enables us to respond to our constituent's and business's goals for access to renewable energy with a much smaller footprint while enhancing on health and national security goals.

Thank you.