

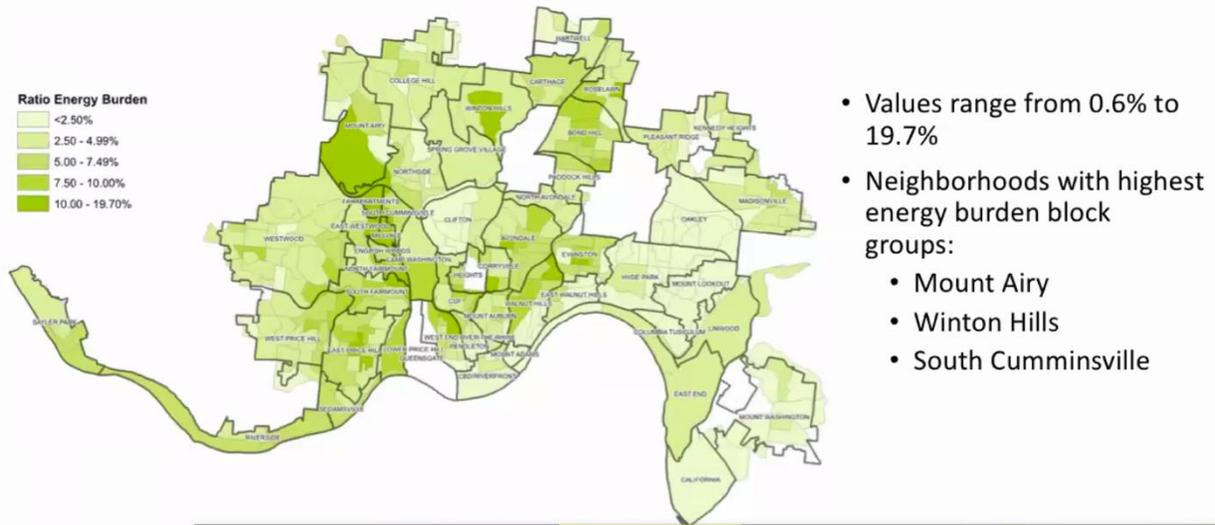
Ariel Miller Proponent Testimony
Ohio House Public Utilities Committee
HB 450 Authorizing Community Solar Projects
Nov. 10, 2021

Chairman Hoops, Vice-Chair Ray, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the House Public Utilities Committee,

Thank you very much for holding this proponent hearing today on HB 450 to authorize community solar projects in Ohio. I am thrilled to support this bill, which will help reduce the energy burden of participating Ohio low-wage workers and senior citizens on fixed incomes. I think Rep. Baldrige's proposal to incentivize projects on brownfields or distressed areas in Appalachian Ohio is a brilliant combination of smart land stewardship and economic redevelopment.

My perspective on this bill comes from having worked for many years as a consultant and grant writer for community-based emergency assistance programs that strive to prevent utility shutoffs. Their utility assistance funds almost always run out near the start of the month. Electric bills are a huge factor in housing instability. This map of energy burden in Cincinnati, which I saw in a Green Umbrella webinar last year, shows that we have neighborhoods where households are paying from 10-almost 20% of their income for utilities.

Energy burden is also unevenly distributed across Cincinnati



If you vote to authorize community solar projects, you will particularly help low-income tenants, who can't benefit from solar energy savings unless the building owner decides to take on that cost. The program will also help taxpayers by reducing the need for HEAP.

In a decade as Executive Director of the Episcopal Community Services Foundation for the Diocese of Southern Ohio, I visited many county seats across Appalachian Ohio, including site visits to communities suffering air and water pollution from abandoned coal mines and current coal-fired plants. I've talked to farmers dealing with subsidence and other impacts. This is why I applaud Rep. Baldrige's proposal to ensure that a significant share of CSPs authorized under this legislation will be on distressed lands in Appalachia.

As a Cincinnati who also worked with non-profits aiding people in the industrial neighborhoods along the Mill Creek, I echo the statement to you by the Rev. Craig Foster that energy burden is a huge problem for urban Ohioans as well. The Mill Creek Valley and other old industrial corridors across Ohio have brownfields which could be restored to valuable economic use through your CSP program.

I hope you can hear me cheering from Cincinnati, encouraging you to vote YES on this bill, a great leap forward for Ohio ratepayers and economically-struggling communities, both rural and urban!

Thank you for considering my testimony!

Sincerely,
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