

TESTIMONY FROM COALITION FOR COMMUNITY SOLAR ACCESS
November 10, 2021

Thank you Chairman Hoops, Ranking member Smith and committee members

My name is Jim Murray and I am the Midwest Director for the Coalition for Community Solar Access. We are a national Coalition of businesses and non-profits working to expand customer access to solar for all through community solar. Collectively our members have built over 3 GW of community solar across the country over the past five years. That equates to \$6BN in private capital deployed and enough energy to power nearly 600,000 homes.

I'm here today speaking in **support of HB 405**. This bill is important to Ohio because it will **unlock the private sector** to help create a more **resilient energy grid**, provide economic benefits to all Ohioans - from landowners in rural parts of the state to potential subscribers in urban areas, and make the benefits of solar energy accessible while saving customers' money on their electricity bills.

Community solar is playing an increasingly important role in providing equitable access to renewable energy. Today, up to 70% of Americans do not have access to solar, either because they rent, cannot afford to install solar panels, or otherwise don't have a roof that can support solar. Community solar provides everyone access to solar energy without the need to install a system on site. Community solar facilities are shared by subscribers who receive credits on their electric bills for their share of the power produced.

Unlike utility scale solar, which can require hundreds or thousands of acres, community solar facilities typically require only around **25 acres per project**. The projects are often co-located on underutilized or underperforming farmland, giving farmers an opportunity to diversify their revenue stream and earn reliable income even in otherwise uncertain times. Community solar facilities can also be located on commercial rooftops or brownfield sites

Most Americans are in favor of an **All-of-the-Above energy strategy**. Community-scale solar has a vital role to play in a diversified electric grid and will distribute benefits more equitably across the state.

There are many benefits to community solar, but there are three in particular I'd like to speak to today: **grid resiliency, bill savings, and economic development**.

At its core, community solar should be a key strategy to improve electric reliability in Ohio. Community solar, especially when paired with battery storage, will make our electric grid more resilient to weather, climate, and large-scale disruptions. Instead of relying on large power plants, and the poles and wires to transmit power hundreds of miles, a grid with more **distributed community-scale solar** can even out the electric load and reduce outages. This will provide particular benefits to disadvantaged communities that are harder-hit by power outages.

Community solar also saves customers money.

The cost of solar has been dropping steadily for over a decade, making it cost competitive with many other forms of energy. Yet today, most Ohioians can't access these cost savings.

. Ohioans already have a choice in their electricity supply provided due to deregulation, but community solar is different. With community solar, customers are not switching the source of their electricity and instead are supporting the development of new solar facilities that will increase the amount of renewable energy that is actually produced in Ohio. With community solar, customers can still choose their electricity supplier or receive utility default service but savings on the community solar subscription are guaranteed and the typical subscriber saves 10-15% annually. These savings are available to all community solar customers including businesses, churches, schools, and regular consumers, regardless of their income level.

Finally, community solar is proven to be a major economic driver. I know I shouldn't mention That State Up North by name, but a new report from Michigan State University studied the impact community solar could have on a state's economy.

The researchers found that community solar would provide a major economic stimulus to the state. In fact, they found community solar will create **\$1.47 billion** in economic impact and create the equivalent of 18,500 family-sustaining jobs over a thirty-year period. And because community solar projects are smaller and right-sized for communities, the impacts would be spread to both rural and urban counties across the state.

Ohio can expect a similar economic impact should this bill pass.

Given all this, it should be no surprise that community solar is the fastest growing form of solar - and Ohio is in a race with other neighboring states like Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania to enable competitive community solar.

We know customers want community solar. We know community solar brings significant societal and environmental benefits. And we know community solar helps customers save money. It's time we remove the regulatory hurdles and let community solar thrive in Ohio. Together we can create a more resilient energy grid, give customers more ways to save on their energy bills, and **kickstart new economic opportunities** across the state.

Thank you again and I welcome any questions you have.

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