

Chair Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the House Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB450, the Community Solar bill. I am delighted to see community solar under consideration in Ohio.

After losing my job just as Covid was taking off, I spent months researching how to start a farm that incorporated solar arrays, a practice known as agrivoltaics. I consulted with solar industry and farming experts and arrived at the following conclusion: this was an impossible project in Ohio because I was not a large corporation with deep pockets, and financing via community solar was not a possibility.

The major financial obstacle was electric grid interconnection through PJM, the local NERC (North American Electric Reliability Corp) authority. PJM has historically dealt with large utilities whose projects could significantly destabilize the electric grid, so their rigorous interconnection process is designed for that type of project. It costs \$10,000 just to submit an application, and roughly the same for each subsequent project phase. It can take multiple years to go through their design and approval process. This makes sense for projects with huge grid impacts but needs to be simplified for community solar sized projects. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory's (NREL) *Guide to Community Solar* suggests regulatory changes such as this that could significantly boost community solar installations. This and other community solar guides are available at <https://www.nrel.gov>.

I encourage you remove the 3000 Mw capacity limit on community solar from the bill. Population growth, retirement of coal powered electricity plants, and environmental concerns will inevitably increase solar electricity demand. The bill's limit will unnecessarily constrain future community solar development.

I had to eliminate the solar component of my agrivoltaics business plan when it became clear that I could not achieve my dream without community solar. HB450 brings that dream one step closer. Thank you for supporting this legislation to make solar power accessible to more Ohio citizens.