



House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
HB 450 - Proponent Testimony
Sarah Spence, Executive Director
November 10, 2021

Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, Ranking Member Smith and members of the Public Utilities Committee: thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 450 (HB450). My name is Sarah Spence, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Ohio Conservative Energy Forum (OHCEF).

OHCEF was founded in 2015 to advocate for a diverse, all-of-the above energy portfolio – one that includes not only existing sources of traditional energy generation, but one that also seeks to expand the development of clean and renewable energy sources. OHCEF believes that clean energy and energy made clean through technology can strengthen both our economy and our national security while providing unmatched opportunities for Ohio-led innovation and job creation.

HB 450 would authorize the creation of community solar in Ohio. Community solar in general refers to local solar facilities shared by multiple community subscribers who receive credits on their electricity bills for their share of the power produced. For Ohio's purposes, the bill defines community solar as a solar project or purchasing program, within a defined geographic area, which allows the benefits of the project to flow to multiple customers such as individuals, business, and nonprofits.

The legislation as drafted would allow for up to 3,000MW of community solar to be built in Ohio:

- 2,000MW on greenfield sites up to 10MW capacity generation per project
- 1,000MW on distressed or brownfield sites up to 45MW capacity generation per project, with 50% of the total megawatt hours to be developed in Ohio's Appalachian region.

Community solar would provide the flexibility needed to meet Ohioans and their communities where they are in terms of solar development. These projects fill the gap between individual rooftop installations and utility-scale projects. Community solar provides homeowners, renters, and businesses equal access to the economic and environmental benefits of solar energy generation regardless of the physical attributes or ownership of their home or business.



Subscribing to these projects can save the subscribers 10-20 percent on their monthly bills while also fueling their local economy and working to positively impact the environment.

Common-sense economic benefits have conservatives across the country championing similar community solar legislation. To date, 21 states have passed legislation encouraging development of these programs and continued efforts to expand consumer options are underway in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Michigan where conservative lawmakers have introduced bills that will remove the regulatory red tape in their states to authorize the development of small-scale community solar projects. We are happy to see Rep. Baldridge and Rep. Lanese leading the effort here in Ohio.

Community solar programs have the added benefit of drawing private investment dollars to areas outside of the traditional utility model which means more jobs, economic development, and tax revenue for local communities. The brownfield and distressed sites would be obvious beneficiaries given their current status of sitting empty, void of economic use, and being often-unsightly barriers to other development around them. And as someone who grew up in rural Appalachia coal country, I appreciate the effort to continue to produce energy in an area that has always been vital to Ohio's energy landscape. Ohio farmers would continue to benefit as they get paid to develop their least productive fields into small, but robust renewable projects, while urban neighborhoods can develop empty lots to create small, neighborhood-based community solar arrays.

Ohioans and companies in Ohio want renewable energy. OHCEF's latest polling data showed that 84% of conservatives believe that Ohio should have at least 25% of its energy mix come from renewable energy sources. That number grows to 94% with conservative voters under the age of 35. Dozens of Ohio's large employers - Sherwin-Williams, Proctor & Gamble, Huntington Bank, Nationwide, Worthington Industries, Cardinal Health - are adding more renewable energy to their portfolios and making commitments to obtain even more. In addition to helping our Ohio-based businesses reach their renewable energy goals, HB 450 will make Ohio a more desirable place to locate small and large businesses as companies across the country and the world look to locate in places that offer access to renewable energy.

HB 450 is common-sense, conservative legislation that supports the economic expansion of affordable, reliable, Ohio-based energy. Thank you again for allowing me to testify in support of HB 450. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.