

Dear Chair Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the House Public Utilities Committee, my name is Ron Schofield, and I wish to offer citizen testimony in support of HB450, the Community Solar bill. This bill is timely in light of the rapidly evolving national energy generation and distribution infrastructure, especially with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that is now on President Biden's desk for signature. HB450 provides for the construction of solar arrays that locally produce low cost, clean power. It promotes the reclamation of distressed sites, such as brownfields, for the construction of solar arrays. This bill will add skilled Ohio jobs in the rapidly growing solar industry. HB450 protects Ohio consumers from non-competitive practices by other energy suppliers and enables Ohio citizens and businesses to affordably build solar energy arrays as aggregated groups. Expansion of community solar projects would be a source of pride for Ohioans, who have historically promoted technologies that benefited people.

I am a citizen of Warren County and an engineer in the Aviation Industry who has watched the expansion of small scale solar, such as rooftop solar, and large scale solar, such as the array in Highland County. These are exciting projects, but they have limits. Small scale solar requires substantial individual investment. I made this investment in 2019 when I built a 25.5 kW array that supplies more power than I consume in my home and electric vehicle. I find great personal satisfaction in the elimination of carbon and other pollutants from my energy use. I took advantage of the federal tax rebate and did much of the construction work, but my project still cost more than many Ohioans can afford.

HB450, the Community Solar bill, enables Ohio citizens of any economic status to proudly participate as members of community groups in the construction and use of mid-sized solar arrays. With the passage of this bill, small businesses and individuals can come together to do what I did. Even more exciting is the opportunity to build these solar projects on property that is of little use to communities, such as brownfields.

HB450, the Community Solar bill, enables Ohio to expand clean energy production with the rest of the nation. Coal power plants in Ohio will continue to close. This bill will give those communities the opportunity to construct new, clean, solar electric plants on the same sites. Ohio portions of the electric grids will be modernized by this bill and the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to improve security and compatibility with renewable energy sources. HB450 will help Ohio move in step with the rapidly improving national energy infrastructure.

HB450, the Community Solar bill, will create and support small businesses that are still the backbone of the Ohio economy. Ohio citizens like me prefer diverse, local businesses tailored to meet the needs of the communities they operate in. Citizens are more skeptical of national and global coal, oil, & gas corporations that entice local communities with money but often fail to maintain a safe environment. Many Ohio communities struggle with soil, water, and air pollution generated by coal, oil, and gas companies that neglected to fulfill their responsibility the health and safety of citizens. These corporations often leave communities with pollution that lasts for decades. Community solar projects are, by definition, local, and clean.

For these and other reasons, I ask you to support the passage of HB450, the Community Solar bill that will help align Ohio's energy future with the rest of the nation. Please give all Ohio citizens and small businesses the opportunity to proudly launch clean, renewable energy projects that create needed energy and jobs.