

Ariel Miller Proponent Testimony, HB 389
Ohio House Public Utilities Committee
Nov. 16, 2021

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

I am writing to encourage you to pass HB 389 to restore energy efficiency programs for ratepayers in Ohio. I am now retired and speaking as an individual citizen, but bring to this testimony many years of concern and work through my career in the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio on behalf of Ohioans – including the working poor and elderly people on fixed income – who struggle under huge energy burden.

In my written testimony last week in favor of HB 450 to authorize community solar, I sent you a map showing neighborhoods in my city, Cincinnati, where some are paying between 10% to almost 20% of their monthly income on utility bills. Energy costs are a major factor in housing insecurity in Ohio. HB 450 would restore utilities' ability to offer energy efficiency programs to these ratepayers. I heartily agree with the refrain "the cheapest energy is energy you don't use." By reducing Ohio families' need for federal energy assistance (HEAP), this will also save taxpayers money.

I am not sure how or if you are going to amend the bill today, but I hope you will keep two provisions:

- automatic enrollment of residential customers and small businesses (while offering them a way to opt out)
- not billing low-income customers.

Energy efficiency reduces demand and benefits all of us by reducing the amount of high-priced electricity the grid needs to draw on during surges. Passing this legislation will also restore the growth in energy efficiency jobs in Ohio – a real win-win for economic development.

I am writing as a person of faith who believes God calls us to care for our vulnerable neighbors. This is why I've worked through religious coalitions on reducing poverty as well as providing emergency assistance. HB 389 has the potential to contribute significantly to reducing poverty by alleviating energy burden. Restoring energy efficiency programs is a powerful step forward that you can take. It will resonate with people of every major faith I know of.

Thank you for considering my testimony!

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