

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
Senate Bill 52
Opposition Testimony
March 23, 2021

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Schuring, and Ranking Member Williams, thank you for the opportunity to submit opposition testimony on Senate Bill 52 and House Bill 118. My name is Alan Heyob. I grew up on the farm where I currently live in Highland County that is involved in a solar project known as Willowbrook.

We have been farming in Highland County since 1968 and began milking cows at my grandparents farm in Harrison Ohio. My uncle also milked cows. We had the dairy until 2013. Many farmers haven't had an easy time of it. We have managed to live ahead of our bills, but barely some years.

To be honest, I wasn't sure if I was interested in solar, but I did a lot of research and better understood the project. I would have never sold the land. Leasing the land makes sense for us. We talked to another solar development company out of Canada, but their proposed project size was too small and could not secure funding. Then we began our conversations with Open Road Renewables and we felt confident in their capabilities. Since then, we toured the Hillcrest Project in Brown County and saw an amazing operation and a small army of men and women building a world-class project that reinforced our confidence in our solar farming decision

I have been hauling grain for neighboring farmers and will continue to do that. I love to be around other farmers and farming is truly my passion. Solar farming allows for farmers to continue to farm, but with stability.

The solar project generates an enormous amount of money that goes into the local economy, and mainly to the schools. Most of our rural communities do not have industry to support the schools. Our project is a community partner and we are proud of the fact that our land is having a bigger hand in helping our community.

I can't understand why anyone would be against solar. If you don't want to look at it—we will have natural vegetation to screen the view and solar is low to the ground, unlike other energy technologies. Every other issue people have, we address through the permitting process. The amount of public hearing, public input, and public discussion is like no other industry.

I request this committee not act on SB 52 or HB 118. Thank you for the opportunity to share my position and hope it was helpful.