

Ohio Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee
Opposition Testimony
Senate Bill 52
May 19, 2021
Mike Pullins

Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my personal experience on being part of a utility-scale solar project. It has become increasingly clear that Ohio is going through an exciting energy transformation and Champaign County is playing a role in this transition.

I am here today to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 52, as it will add additional regulations to already robust energy siting process. I feel this is a dangerous step in government overreach to landowner property rights.

My wife and I have been farming for over 40 years and I retired from the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation after 33 years. My sons and I have a significant farming operation of corn and soybeans, in addition to a raspberries and peaches.

I believe that solar energy is just another form of farming. In fact, solar can be a lot more efficient in converting solar energy than plants. This diversification in our operation assures steady income year after year while our agricultural crops are impacted by weather, market forces, trade, and so many other unpredictable events.

In 2015 we invested in a 74 Kw solar array to power our farm. It supplies over 70% of our farm power needs and after 6 years has paid back our investment.

Today renewable energy stands on its own and is the cheapest form of new power generation. I have made significant renewable energy investments over the years and the returns on these investments have exceeded my other traditional investments.

Our philosophy is that we are business people who farm. Diversifying our income beyond crops helps protect our farm. We did not rush into anything and did our due diligence. We spent over a year working with Open Road Renewables and our legal counsel to make sure it was good for us, our neighbors, and our community.

Also, what is rarely shared, but something that everyone should know, is that solar projects leave the land in a better place than pre-construction—higher organic matter and better tith. There is little to no long-term impact on the land. In fact, 30 years in solar is very similar to USDA 's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which I also have some acres in.

So out of our 1,400 acres—some we lease, some we operate, some is in CRP, and now 100 acres will be in solar production. This is true agriculture diversification. Solar helps to protect my family, my farm, and the future for our kids and grandkids. Solar also brings economic strength and stability to Champaign County and Ohio through an increased tax base and jobs.

In closing, I believe this I'll conceived legislation is an affront to good government, Republican principles, property owners and all businesses in Ohio. It seems designed to intimidate energy developers and all business to go elsewhere. The message to all business is that Ohio can change the rules at any time and your investment is gone. It says Ohio is not a good place to invest.

As a lifelong Republican, I weep for our party and our state.

Again, I ask that this committee to oppose Senate Bill 52. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today and happy to answer any questions.