

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

Daniel J. Sawmiller, Ohio Energy Policy Director

on Substitute Senate Bill 52

Before the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee



Columbus, Ohio

May 18, 2021

Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities committee, my name is Dan Sawmiller and I'm the Ohio Energy Policy Director at the Natural Resources Defense Council. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to substitute Senate Bill 52.

Substitute Senate Bill 52 is -perhaps unintentionally- designed in a way that could halt renewable energy development in Ohio by creating duplicative, burdensome regulations on renewable energy projects, both for new projects and those already pending. I'm unaware of any other Ohio economic development or energy generation projects subjected to a similar regulatory structure as proposed in this substitute bill.

NRDC has already testified in opposition to the original bill when it was last before this committee and the substitute version provides no justification for a change in our position. As such, NRDC remains opposed to substitute Senate Bill 52 and would be interested in attending interested party discussions aimed at meaningful compromise should that be considered by the committee in the future. As of today's committee hearing, no interested party discussions have been held to our knowledge. Before taking such drastic action as proposed by this bill, with such far-reaching impacts on Ohio's economic competitiveness and public health, the legislature should commit itself to meaningful engagement with all impacted stakeholders to ensure that Ohio's growing clean energy economy can continue to move forward so that our state can reap the benefits of a thriving clean energy economy.

NRDC has extensive experience working before the Public Utilities Commission and the Ohio Power Siting Board in Ohio and can offer our expertise if the legislature feels strongly that reform is needed. It is worth noting however that the Ohio Power Siting Board is currently engaged in a 5-year rule review process that will address the same topics covered by this legislation. Many impacted stakeholders are already engaged in that public rule review process, which should be allowed to conclude prior to making preemptive changes to Ohio's renewable energy siting laws.

Furthermore, we suggest that the Power Siting Board be brought before this committee to provide further clarification on the current siting process and the diligence their expert staff members apply to soliciting and responding to local community feedback when renewable energy projects are proposed in the state.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. NRDC urges you to vote no on substitute Senate Bill 52, and more pointedly, we encourage interested stakeholder discussions at the conclusion of the OPSB's 5-year rule review process, prior to making legislative changes that may have unintended consequences for one of Ohio's fastest growing economies.