

TESTIMONY of Barbara Behling  
Champaign County  
IN OPPOSITION TO Sub. H. B. 114

Chairman Balderson, Vice Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Committee; my name is Barbara Behling and I am a resident of Champaign county. I am here to speak against the proposed reduction of the property line setbacks for industrial wind turbines in Sub HB 114.

In 2008, my husband and I were offered a 20-year lease agreement for wind turbines. We were to receive an annual payment until the turbines were built, a one-time fee for each installed turbine, and annual rent for each megawatt of generation capacity. We saw dollar signs. We saw an easy way to supplement our sometimes uncertain farm income.

We knew nothing about wind turbines at the time, but subsequent research convinced us, without a doubt, that wind turbines did not belong intermingled with homes. We turned down the lease agreement. Now, 10 years later, and even more educated about the hazards of siting turbines close to another's property, we know that was the right decision. But why would we refuse thousands of dollars of additional income? Because the negative impacts of poorly sited wind turbines far outweigh any monetary compensation we would have received.

Experience can and should be a great teacher. There are numerous examples from other communities of the potential hazards, the property devaluation and especially the deterioration to quality of life when turbines are sited too close to another's property. As property line setbacks are being increased in other communities, Ohio is considering reducing setbacks. Why are we not willing to learn from the experience of others?

In May, there was a blade failure at Huron Wind in Ontario. William Palmer, a professional engineer who has testified before the Ohio Power Siting Board was able to gain access to the site and measure the debris field. I have attached his assessment to my testimony. (ATTACHEMNT A) It documents pieces traveling about 1,800 feet from the tower. I urge to really look at Mr. Palmer's photo documentation and ask yourself why you would support a setback that, at 1.2x turbine height, is only one-third the distance that blade pieces traveled at Huron Wind.

To conclude, public safety must be the starting point to determine the rules for a property line setbacks. Numbers pulled out of the air and a wind developer's desire to erect more and more turbines must not be part of the considerations. If mandating a safer setback means a wind project cannot be built in a certain area, then so be it; another site that protects the property rights of everyone can and should be selected. The only thing to keep in mind is the critical purpose of a property line setback. It is to protect people and property from the unique hazards of wind turbines, including broken blades, ice throw, shadow flicker and low frequency sound waves. Your job as legislators is to write the rules to ensure that protection.

To that end, paragraph 4906.20 of this bill should retain and not decrease the current minimum property line setback that was duly signed in 2014.