

Downsize Farm Support Services  
806 N Parkview Road  
Woodstock, OH 43084  
W: (937) 834-4277



Bob Custer  
Agency Director  
bob@downsizefarm.com  
C: (937) 215-8324

## *Turbine Testimony*

Energy and Natural Resources Committee

June 20, 2018

Chairman Balderson, Vice Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Committee; my name is Bob Custer 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My family and I live on Parkview Road in Rush Township on the eastern side of Champaign County. I am here today to explain why I am opposed to the proposed wind turbine project in our community and other rural communities in Ohio. Wind energy can be very destructive. The use of wind turbines as a source of renewable energy can have a devastating effect on the quality of life in Ohio as well.

I grew up on a family dairy farm in northern Wisconsin. In 1978, my wife Midge and I learned how quickly wind energy can destroy. We had built a new split-level home and were on the back deck when all the signs of an impending storm encroached. But this was different. Debris began flying through the air...by the time we pulled our two boys under a mattress downstairs the windows were blown out and part of the roof was gone. We later learned we were in the path of a tornado that would wind its way through our county. It all happened so quickly, I was not well insured and we had to figure out a way to adjust and rebuild...because that is where we wanted to live. What we learned is that wind can be destructive to all who live in its path.

Today I already know the path of destruction planned for our community in Champaign County...my family and I live in the footprint of a proposed project that will impact the day-to-day experience and those of many of our neighbors for the rest of our lives. I can't insure against this storm and rather than warn us of inherent safety concerns, proponents are seeking to downplay the dangers. It is ironic that in the narrative that expresses concern for the footprint left by energy sources, there is so little concern for the footprint left by wind energy investors in a rush to capitalize on government subsidies. I want to express what I believe will be the impact of this proposed course of action on the quality of life for my family, my business and my community....and will impact other rural communities as well.

When I talk about quality of life, do not mistake the concept with "standard of living". Quality of life is the term the County Chamber of Commerce uses to describe as the key reason

people want to live there. Located within 40 miles of Columbus and several other urban economic centers, Champaign County retains a country feel in its beautiful rolling hills. It is the home of AB Graham and the renowned 4-H youth and OSU extension programs.

My family moved to Champaign County in 1989 and in 2001 faced a decision to relocate or make a career change. We decided to stay in Ohio because of the quality of life here, including significant resources for children with developmental disabilities. Our son Levi was born in 1994 and I felt a need to not just give him a place to live, but to build a quality of life. That was the start of “Downsize Farm”...2.5 acres on Parkview Road...just the right size for a boy with Down Syndrome...and other people with DD. In 2006, the landscape for DD services in Ohio was quickly changing...County Boards could no longer provide services and private providers were needed to meet the mandate of integration into communities. Today Downsize Farm provides “quality of life” services to over 60 individuals from several counties, as well as providing jobs for many more.

But living in the footprint and the path of wind energy forces, puts all of this at risk. From our location more than a dozen giant turbines will be observable. All the reported health risks associated with turbine fields are amplified within the DD population, especially for those on the autism spectrum who can be mesmerized by repetitive motion or impacted by inaudible sounds. Short-term, disruption of services by road construction for our seven buses is significant. Long-term, the environmental impact is devastating. The place where my family loves to live becomes the place that nobody wants. Would you want to re-locate your home or business to a turbine field if you had no financial benefit? If you wanted to re-locate, could you retain enough equity to do so? Many of my neighbors face this exact dilemma. Other Champaign and Logan County residents have already been able to say “not here!”. Why? Because long before Green Energy was ever a thought, people who live here had a heritage of a love for the land, a respect for property rights, and a desire to make a community contribution. That is what made turbine lease-holders susceptible to the siren song of business investors and under-cover strategies.

But today the siren is sounding in rural Ohio communities warning of the impending destruction of wind energy forces. No form of future energy resources, renewable or otherwise, poses as great a threat to the quality of life in rural Ohio as the wind energy industry. I have a famous namesake, General George Custer, who was a government agent mandated to quell the resistance to business developers in the West. Of them Chief Sitting Bull said: “They claim this

Mother of ours, the Earth, for their own use, and fence their neighbors far away, only to deface Her with their big buildings and piles of refuse.” Those Native Americans loved their home-land and progress left them homeless, heart-broken and angry. Current wind energy plans are certain to leave the same path of destruction across our beautiful state.