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March 23, 2021

RE: BPK testimony

Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the committee thank you for the opportunity to submit opposition testimony on House Bill 118. My name is Brian P. Kinzelman and I am the CEO of MKSK.

MKSK is an Ohio Corporation with headquarters in Columbus providing Landscape Architecture and Planning services for a wide range of projects. Those projects include community planning for municipalities/institutions, higher education and healthcare campuses, parks and public spaces, waterfronts, transportation facilities and private developments. We currently employ 95 people in 8 locations from Detroit to Atlanta and with Ohio offices in Columbus and Cincinnati. Our projects include the new Crew Stadium, the Scioto Mile and the Arena District planning here in Columbus. Around the state, we've had the good fortune of designing the Canton Centennial Plaza, Toledo's Promenade Park, and Blue Ash's Summit Park. As a bit of personal background, I've been working in this profession for nearly 44 years. I am a licensed Landscape Architect in Ohio and 6 other states, a member of the Council of Fellows in the American Society of Landscape Architects, accredited as a professional planner by the American Institute of Certified Planners and hold certification in LEED, an acronym for Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design.

While the portfolio of projects that we work on covers a wide range of land uses, project types and aesthetic goals, I'm here today to talk to you about the emerging solar industry and work we've been engaged in for many months. Environmental stewardship, which includes clean air & water, are at the core of my profession and our practice. Through my 44 years in this profession, sound environmental practices, including the use of native species of trees, shrubs, and other landscape solutions hasn't changed much but the use software tools to accurately simulate views and arrive at ideal design solutions has improved dramatically, making for more concise visualization in the design process and communication to the community. As we understand it, viewshed impact is one of the key concerns of local community members when they first learn about a solar project coming to their community. This is an understandable concern given the natural beauty of Ohio's rural landscape. However, we firmly believe that an effective and rigorously-produced landscape plan can mitigate the viewshed impact, and when done properly, can result in a solar project blending seamlessly into the rural aesthetic while satisfying many other environmental concerns.

What we've learned working on these solar projects thus far is this:

- Site-specific designs generally result in heterogeneous plant clusters versus homogenous evergreen hedgerows and are more fitting to the natural Ohio landscape and are more environmentally correct solutions.
- Plantings should be in smaller sizes and a mix of those sizes at installation to improve their vigor as they grow in over time and further the naturalizing of the landscape.

- Selecting the right mix of species that require no artificial irrigation after planting is key. Picking the right plants for the right place is critical.
- Properly designed landscape solutions as required by the Siting Board enhance the enduring ecological condition of the area and further the sustainability of the rural landscape.

Additionally, through the use of software modeling tools, we've found that we can vet and optimize the landscape plan for treatment where a neighbor has direct line-of-site to a solar array, for example, whereas a less dense solution may be appropriate in a region of the project where there's further setbacks and no direct line-of-site exists. Our aim is to complement and enhance the existing rural vernacular landscape while reducing the visual impact of a given project with carefully designed edges and perimeters utilizing indigenous pollinator plantings, always with an eye toward environmental sustainability. Taken with the added benefits of enhanced flora and fauna communities and stormwater absorption, effective landscape design furthers the sustainability goals of the overall project. One other thought is this. Each of these projects calls for a significant amount of "nursery stock", plants preferably grown locally and regionally for sake of plant culture compatibility. With the growth of solar in Ohio, an opportunity is created for an expanded market for agricultural products for Ohio growers. The demand is measurable and real.

As I understand it, the proponents of this bill believe that the Siting Board process needs to be supplemented by a local vote from community members. That appears unnecessary in my view given the rigor of our design process and our experience at the Siting Board and the Applicant's meetings with stakeholders, which have resulted in multiple iterations of landscape plan refinement of the project sites which we've worked on.

In closing, given my experience in the field of Landscape Architecture, I firmly believe that the rural aesthetic can be maintained and even enhanced through thoughtful and professional landscape design and I stand ready to continue supporting the interests of the local communities where these projects are being proposed. I appreciate your time and attention and will be happy to answer any questions that the members of the Committee may have.

Respectfully submitted
MKSK, Inc



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