

Before the Ohio House Public Utilities Committee
Opponent Testimony on HB 118
March 23, 2021

Dear Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, Ranking Member Smith and members of the House Public Utilities Committee:

On behalf of The Columbus Partnership, I urge you and your colleagues to oppose House Bill 118, "Revise law governing wind farms and solar facilities." This legislation will create significant challenges for businesses and organizations across the State of Ohio as our state continues to focus on job creation and prosperity. Additionally, this new regulatory requirement will create an anti-business driven environment at the Ohio Power Siting Board.

The Columbus Partnership is a non-profit, membership-based leadership organization of 80 chairpersons, chief executive officers and senior executives from the region's leading businesses and institutions. Our members include 15 Fortune 1000 CEOs, leaders of the nation's largest university and world's largest research and development organization and many key players in the auto industry and clean energy industry.

Businesses and institutions in our 11-counties have made the Columbus Region their home because of our business-friendly environment. Currently, the Columbus Region has more than 15 companies considering capital investment amounts of over 14 billion dollars, in turn creating over 20,000 jobs. Each of those investment opportunities either require or prefer renewables as the source of energy. Over time, these companies have chosen to become increasingly invested in solar energy procurement for their facilities and operations.

There must be a commitment to offering renewable energy that comes from Ohio so companies can have a positive impact on the state where they operate. Demand for this is clear, with Columbus Partnership member organizations including AEP, Huntington, Cardinal Health, Abercrombie & Fitch Co., Denison University and The Ohio State University purchasing large amounts of Ohio-based renewable energy. Other entities, including five of our major partners, also affirm that the demand for Ohio-based clean energy is growing at a rapid pace.

There are now over 118,500 residents employed at 155 facilities with renewable energy goals and major investments in solar energy all across Central Ohio's counties. These companies have expressed a desire and interest in investing and buying power specifically from new Ohio solar projects so that their procurement is more impactful to the Ohio economy, supports new job creation, generates new tax revenue for Ohio municipalities and improves air quality locally. However, if this bill were to pass, all of these companies would struggle as their local investment, job creation and output stall due to increased government overreach.

This bill particularly impacts the auto industry and the burgeoning clean energy industry, both of which are crucial employers and key players in Central Ohio. The auto industry has aggressive renewable energy goals and employs over 22,000 people at over 200 facilities in just the Central Ohio region. The clean energy industry currently employs over 114,000 hard-working Ohioans statewide. Ohio must be seen as a pro-business state during the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. I urge you to consider not adding a regulatory burden that could jeopardize jobs and create stagnation in production of our local economy.

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Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. R. Fischer', written in a cursive style.

Alex R. Fischer
President and CEO
ARF/gb