

House Public Utilities Committee
House Bill 118
Opposition Testimony
March 23, 2021

Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, and Ranking Member Smith, and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to provide testimony on House Bill 118. My name is Sarah Knudsen and I am a fifth generation owner on our Greene County farm.

Spending time at my grandparents' farm in Greene County was a favorite memory of growing up. I was glad when I was old enough to help my grandparents with the gardening and yard care, and especially when I graduated to driving the tractor. They taught me good stewardship of the land for the next generation of farmers.

As an adult, I married and moved to Texas. Two years ago, my husband, children and I had the opportunity to return to Ohio. We bought the home my grandparents built for their retirement on the farm. Now, our children are sharing my childhood memories of the farm, and the surrounding area.

We support our family's commitment to the Kingwood Solar project. Just last month, as the world could see, and our friends still in Texas experienced, adding another significant power source to the grid is beneficial. A combination of energy sources, including renewable sources, creates less volatility for the grid. Ohio's responses to the pandemic are being repaid by new business commitment. Broadband development into our rural areas, housing expansion and business expansion significantly impact electric requirements.

As we explore the county, we are disturbed by signs, "Save our Farmland, Stop Industrial Solar." The truth is, this project can help save farmland. The Kingwood Solar project is not on community farmland. The farmers retain ownership of the land. This is farmers, believing in clean energy, building up the soil, and returning benefits to the community, committing to a high tech crop. The solar lease company is committed to restoring the land at the end of the project at its expense. Other sources of energy create significant problems in communities all over Ohio. Fracking produces **3,400 billion liters** of wastewater each year and releases harmful methane gases into the air. Last year, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) said that fracking waste from an injection well had migrated to another well five miles away. And just last month, the ODNR confirmed that an oil and gas well spilled thousands of gallons of fracking waste, impacting a nearby tributary and killing fish. All energy has its issues, but solar is by far the cleanest and most abundant energy resource.

The group opposing the project has been active for two years, and our project hasn't even filed with the Ohio Power Siting Board—so the argument that there has been no community input is completely unfounded.

The Kingwood organization company has had one-on-one conversations, community meetings (even outside of what they have to do by law), have a website and Facebook page with maps, and FAQs. We are an open book.

Information available on the Kingwood website shows that approximately 50% of the land remains uncovered by panels and there are no permanent foundations within the solar array area. Drainage is maintained or redesigned, there is little grading or soil compaction and the top soil stays on site. The project will use significantly fewer pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers than is currently used. Kingwood Solar will plant native, pollinator friendly plant species that will have a positive impact on local harvest yields. Temporary removal of the project lands from agricultural production will allow for improved soil health throughout the life of the solar project.

We are proud to be able to add value to the community, even more than what our farm could do. Clean energy generation, \$1.5 million annually to local schools, townships, and Greene County—that is \$45 million over the life of the project—Kingwood Solar will be one of the largest revenue generators in the County.