

Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee  
Chairman Rob McColley

Opponent Testimony on SB52  
Written Testimony of Brian Dicken  
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Chairman McColley, Vice Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member Williams and Members of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, good afternoon, my name is Brian Dicken and I am the vice president of advocacy and strategic initiatives for the Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber represents more than 2,000 members in Northwest Ohio across every sector and of every size. Thank you for the opportunity to share the Chamber's opposition to Senate Bill 52.

Northwest Ohio is the birthplace of Harold McMaster, the Glass Genius who revolutionized solar technology. In the 1980s, McMaster launched Glasstech Solar and then Solar Cells Inc., which pioneered the use of cost-effective solar arrays for commercial use.

Solar Cells Inc. later became – appropriately – First Solar in Perrysburg. First Solar has grown to be the largest manufacturer of solar panels in the western hemisphere, making it a world leader in manufacturing and supporting development of solar power plants around the globe.

While the Toledo Region is understandably proud of our solar legacy, renewable energy is creating jobs and investment throughout the state of Ohio. According to the national trade group American Clean Power, renewable energy is responsible for approximately 6,000 well-paying Ohio jobs, \$2 billion in private capital investment, and \$11.4 million in 2020 property, state and local taxes in Ohio – and those numbers are growing.

Renewable energy is also vitally important in supporting Ohio's primary industry, agriculture – the cradle of which is in Northwest Ohio. Many farmers and other landowners have signed lease agreements to allow wind turbines or solar panels on their farms. This provides them with much-needed revenue during a time of uncertainty caused by international trade disputes, inclement weather and the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 alone, clean energy projects provided \$8.8 million in additional income to farmers, ranchers and other private landowners.

Clearly, renewable energy is a key ingredient in Ohio's economy. But as important as it is today, market forces will make it an even bigger part of our future.

Fortune 500 companies around the country are leading the way by pledging to increase their use of clean power, both to be more efficient and in order to meet the ambitious sustainability goals demanded by their customers and shareholders. Our small and middle market companies are making the same kinds of investments for many of the same reasons. The states that do not embrace and adapt to this energy revolution are sure to be left behind.

Senate Bill 52 would create a burdensome and restrictive bureaucratic process for clean energy projects—unlike requirements for any other industry in the state. In addition to the state’s existing comprehensive permitting process by the Ohio Power Siting Board, the requirement for a township to designate an energy development district before construction can begin is burdensome for potential developers. With more than 1,300 townships in Ohio, this creates considerable uncertainty, and that is a barrier to new jobs and investment.

Landowners and businesses would have to launch a successful political campaign for the right to go forward with wind or solar projects. It also means that Ohio farmers and other property owners could be unduly stripped of their property rights through a vote of their neighbors. If it is wind and solar today, what industry or company will be next?

Ohio has the assets to attract new residents and businesses – but we won’t do it with policies that tell the innovators and employers of an entire growing industry, and those that demand this resource, that Ohio does not want them here.

Recent data shows that the majority of Ohioans agree with renewable energy. So it doesn’t make sense to impose unnecessary burdens and uncertainty for job creators and landowners.

Furthermore, I would encourage the legislature to focus efforts on the development of a true “all of the above” energy strategy for Ohio. This strategy should embrace all forms of energy production - recognizing the contributions of each and taking into account current and future market demand by consumers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.