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Testimony before the Ohio State Senate Re: Accelerating Ohio's Automotive Industry Bill (AOAI) March 24th, 2022 Alexis Blomqvist, Data and Research Manager, EVHybridNoire

Good afternoon/morning to everyone gathered today. I want to first begin by thanking you for the opportunity to submit testimony around SB 307. My name is Alexis Blomqvist, and I serve as the Data and Research Manager for EVHybridNoire, the nation's largest network of diverse electric vehicle drivers and enthusiasts, including EV drivers in Ohio. I am passionate about equitable transportation as much as I am passionate about the state of Ohio, both as an Ohio native and Ohio State Alumna. In fact, EVHybridNoire itself is closely connected to the state being that we are a Black-led, e-mobility justice-centered organization founded by a native Ohioan and former Ohio State faculty member. Our mission is to advance multimodal, electric vehicles (EVs), including electric buses, e-bikes, e-scooters and other transportation electrification (or "e-mobility") solutions across the U.S. -- and ensure those solutions are inclusive and equitable. We do that by engaging with communities often left out of e-mobility discussions, advocating for e-mobility solutions that benefit underrepresented and under resourced communities, and shifting the narrative about e-mobility to be more inclusive of diverse populations. It is that mission that puts EVHybridNoire in a position to speak on the introduction of SB 307, and that brings me here today to discuss the important implications of transportation in the state of Ohio for its most vulnerable residents.

Broadly, EVHybridNoire urges Ohio to pass SB 307, as the key points of the bill directly support communities that have historically been excluded or disproportionately impacted by the transportation status quo. Ensuring that Ohio is poised to move into the transportation future - and to do so equitably - depends on steps such passing legislation like SB 307.

Electrification has the potential to address many of the pressing transportation needs in diverse and frontline communities while also making strides to close larger institutional inequities like disparate public health outcomes and exposure to pollutants. Due to their lower fuel and maintenance costs, electric vehicles can improve the economic security of the most vulnerable Ohioans. In fact, Consumer Reports found that lower operation and maintenance costs can save consumers between \$6,000-\$10,000 over a typical vehicle's lifetime. These savings come in the form of charging costs, which are up to 60% lower than the costs incurred by an owner of a gas-powered vehicle. Similarly, EV owners spend approximately half as much to repair and maintain their vehicle as owners of gas-powered vehicles, a cost saving that especially benefits used EV owners, a demographic that has potential to grow rapidly if more used models are available and frontline community residents are engaged appropriately around the technology.

State Percentiles for Demographic Indicators, Cuyahoga County State Percentiles for PM 2.5, Cuyahoga County



In terms of public health outcomes, Cuyahoga County serves as an important example of disparate exposure to harmful pollutants in frontline communities. The county has a demographic index in the 91st percentile in the state, meaning that the average of **low income** households and people of color is higher than 91% of the rest of the state. Comparatively, the county is in the **90th** percentile in the state for **particulate matter** (PM 2.5) and in the 91st percentile in the state for diesel particulate matter, a statistic that is also staggering at the national level: Cuyahoga county is in the 80-90th percentile in the United States for diesel particulate matter, meaning that residents in Cuyahoga county are exposed to more diesel particulate matter than 80-90% of the entire United States.

Taken together, these statistics mean that concentrated areas of low income and populations of color experience greater exposure to pollutants like PM2.5, which the EPA has identified as risk factors for health conditions like premature death in people with heart or lung disease, aggravated asthma and decreased lung function as well as increased risk of certain cancers. The existential threat of air pollution makes zero-emission vehicles an imperative for these frontline communities. These communities are also often hit first and worst by the many impacts of the climate crisis, and EVs are an essential part of cutting the carbon emissions fueling that problem.

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The AOAI bill works to address EV accessibility through the introduction of a sales tax exemption on EVs, both for new and used vehicles; the inclusion of used vehicles in the incentive is a critical equity component that ensures that frontline communities have accessible price points to enter the EV market. Furthermore, the bill also looks to capitalize on the economic opportunity of electrification to transform Ohio's vital automotive industry, an industry that generates one in every eight jobs in Ohio, to be future-facing. Proactive policymaking like SB 307 represents a move that would have potential to uplift frontline communities in the process. To sum up the impetus for passing SB 307, please consider the following:

- Job losses in the automotive industry disproportionately impacted diverse and frontline communities: Creating and retaining high quality clean energy automotive jobs in Ohio is one of the major impetus for the bill, and rightfully so: the automotive industry contributed \$108 billion to the state economy in 2015, nearly 20% of the total economic output statewide. However, communities of color were most impacted by contractions in the labor force: while the manufacturing sector contracted from a substantial 22.7 percent of all jobs in 1990 to just <u>12.7 percent by 2016</u>. However, white workers experienced a **28.5%** loss of employment, compared to Black workers whose loss was nearly double at **46%**.
- Access to personal vehicle ownership is critical for social mobility for diverse and frontline communities: Personal vehicle ownership can be disproportionately expensive for low income households. According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, average vehicle-owning U.S. households earning less than \$25,000 spend 50% of their income on vehicle ownership and operation annually, which is nearly three times higher than median-income vehicle-owning households³. Making things worse, frontline communities rely more on transportation than their counterparts to get access to high-quality education and opportunities for employment. Education and employment access are already stratified by race in Ohio: high school graduation rates are lowest for Hispanic and Black students (74% and 69% respectively) compared to white students who have a graduation rate of nearly 90%⁴. Similarly, the unemployment rate for Black Ohioians is nearly three times higher than for white workers, and double the state average⁵. The ability to close gaps in economic security is dependent on transportation that is reliable, flexible, and cost effective, a set of characteristics for which electric vehicles are especially well-suited.
- The creation of a statewide task force is critical for including marginalized voices in the conversation around transportation: Another mechanism that SB 307 introduces is the task force that would be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the incentive program and factory retooling/rededuation grants. On the task force, EVHybridNoire worked to ensure the inclusion of a community based organization and a public health organization as part of the 13 members appointed to the task force by the governor. The context I have provided today is evidence also of the need for frontline voices in this conversation as it moves forward to ensure that the benefits of electrification reach all Ohians.

The benefits of increasing EV accessibility for diverse, frontline, and underserved communities include economic, environmental and public health benefits that would begin to level the playing field for the state's most vulnerable populations. As Ohio looks forward to the future, we cannot forget the past that has left frontline communities marginalized in the transportation landscape; therefore EVHybridNoire urges Ohio's leaders to pass SB 307 to ensure that the future we are building benefits everyone.

On behalf of the entire EVHybridNoire team and our members, I again thank the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on this topic, and would welcome any follow-up questions via Alexis@EVHybridNoire.com from committee members or their staff.