

Ariel Miller Proponent Testimony on HB 79
to the Ohio House Public Utilities Committee
April 26, 2023

Dear Chairman Stein, Vice Chair Robb Blasdel, Ranking Member Weinstein, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you very much for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 79, Rep. Seitz' and Rep. Sweeney's bill to enable electric distribution utilities to resume offering energy efficiency incentives to residential and small business customers.

My name is Ariel Miller. I am a Christian public health professional who has been working for 35 years as a reporter and consultant to the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio to help congregations design and implement programs to equip their neighbors to emerge from poverty. Energy burden is a major factor in housing insecurity. Many of our congregations contribute to local emergency assistance programs that try to prevent utility shut-offs. Typically, the need exceeds the available funds early every month. This is only going to get worse this summer as utilities implement large rate increases. As Ohio endures increasingly severe heat waves, soaring peak demand stresses our grid and will lead to more of the blackouts that harmed so many Ohioans last year, particularly low-income customers unable to protect themselves against deadly temperatures and expense of food that spoiled.

By helping households afford the upfront cost of making their homes more efficient, you will be helping these households reduce their monthly bills and prevent utility shut-offs. You'll reduce demand on the grid, helping to keep electric rates lower for everyone and the supply of electricity more reliable.

As a public health reporter, I support this bill because it will help reduce Ohioans' risk of asthma and cardiovascular disease from exposure to fine particulate air pollution from fossil fuel electric generation.

As the editor of a worldwide environmental solutions newsletter for Rotarians, I have to report on the rapidly-increasing damage which climate change is doing to health, businesses, farming, and infrastructure all over the world. By promoting efficiency to help Ohio homes and businesses meet their energy needs with less electricity, this bill will also reduce Ohio's carbon emissions, helping to slow global warming. This bill is a win-win policy for Ohio and the rest of the world. You will save your constituents money and help save lives and livelihoods worldwide. Climate change – intensifying floods, drought, crop failure – is one of the factors forcing millions of people to become refugees. By passing this bill, you're helping to make it more possible for them to survive and thrive in their homelands.

Thank you for holding this hearing on HB 79! Please endorse this practical bipartisan bill.

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