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Proponent Testimony by Stephen S. Bagstad on House Bill 197

House Public Utilities Committee
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Chairman Stein, Vice-Chair Blasdel, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the House Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on behalf of House Bill 197 (HB 197), a bill to encourage community solar. My name is Steve Bagstad, and I am a private citizen, Ohio resident, and climate activist.

I am a member and leader of several climate-related organizations, retired professional engineer and certified energy manager, and hold Masters degrees in both mechanical engineering and business.

I see several major aspects of community solar on which I'd like to comment.

The first that I do see often in discussions about it is that it provides a way for those that may wish to use solar energy another great option. As you are no doubt aware, many of our citizens and small businesses may not have good options with local solar such as rooftop or ground-mounted. They might have a shaded or otherwise inappropriate roof, or simply a roof that isn't their own; they may not have the financial resources to install solar; or they might be in a shorter-term situation where a long-term investment doesn't fit. Community solar addresses all of these by providing clean energy options right in their own area.

The second that I don't see mentioned much if at all is that community solar can help our local, state, and national electrical grid. As we move further toward electrification, and continue to add electricity use "business as usual" will increasingly stress our electrical systems. Community solar can help with this by providing electrical power wherever it is located and needed, and thus reduce the need to transmit electricity over longer distances. It could also help with grid resilience by having locally available electricity at times when it is needed, reducing dependence on point sources that may be distant from local communities.

Finally, I would suggest that community solar could be used effectively throughout our state, allowing all our citizens to potentially enjoy its benefits. For example, we have many public areas/facilities such as county fairgrounds, schools, parks, etc. that could have readily available property for community solar. Just as examples in my immediate area, our City schools have such property; our County fairgrounds do as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on behalf of HB 197. I am happy to answer your questions, although as this submission is not in person this would have to be by text, call, or email.