Testimony of Scott Elias, Vice President of Policy and Market Development, CleanCapital

To the

House Public Utilities Committee—Proponent Testimony for H.B. 197

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

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony today in strong support of H.B. 197, which aims to establish a Community Solar Pilot Program in Ohio.

Introduction

As background, I am Scott Elias, Vice President of Policy and Market Development at CleanCapital, a proud member of the Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA). CleanCapital is a diversified clean energy investment platform focused on the middle-market solar and storage industry and one of the largest commercial solar asset owners in the U.S. To date, CleanCapital has deployed over $1 billion to fund operating, new construction, and early-stage development of solar and storage assets across 26 states and one U.S territory. Specifically, CleanCapital invests in early-stage development, new construction, and operating solar and energy storage projects, as well as partner companies developing future pipeline opportunities. We are currently developing several projects throughout Ohio and are committed to investing in community solar projects, should the General Assembly pass HB 197.

Community Solar Remains an Untapped Economic Opportunity in Ohio

Ohio has long been recognized for its rich history in energy production. As the landscape of energy generation continues to rapidly evolve, Rep. Hoops and Rep. Ray have presented a forward-thinking approach that will enable the private sector to work in collaboration with Ohio's electric distribution utilities to provide local energy to Ohio communities and reduce electricity costs for customers.

Community solar refers to local solar facilities shared by multiple community subscribers who receive credit on their electricity bills for their share of the power produced. Community solar benefits homeowners, renters, and businesses by providing them equal access to the economic and environmental benefits of solar energy generation regardless of the physical attributes or ownership of their home or business.

Community solar can also be an economic driver for communities across Ohio, including rural communities. At a time when many agricultural producers are struggling, solar creates additional revenue streams and helps support farmer incomes. Increasingly, we hear from farmers who want to lease a portion of their land for a community solar farm and rely on solar lease payments as a steady revenue stream to help mitigate market volatility, droughts and other threats to their livelihoods. Put simply, community solar can help family farms stay in the family and counteract the ongoing trend of farms being lost due to economic hardships.

Community Solar Contributes to Energy Resilience and Grid Reliability

In addition to the economic benefits of community solar, diversifying our energy sources through community solar projects also enhances our energy resilience and grid reliability. Distributed energy generation reduces the risk of large-scale power outages and enhances the stability of our electrical

infrastructure. That is because community solar is a decentralized form of energy that is generated near the point of consumption, which reduces the strain on distribution systems and prevents losses in long-distance electricity transmission and distribution. This will benefit all Ohioans, especially during extreme weather events that have become more frequent and severe in recent years.

Community Solar Will Transform Ohio Brownfields into Brightfields

Landfills and other brownfields present a unique opportunity for community solar development and H.B. 197 reserves 500 MW of the community solar pilot program for facilities constructed exclusively on distressed sites, which includes projects across the state's Appalachian region.

In 2022, CleanCapital acquired BQ Energy, a national leader in brownfield and landfill clean energy development. As a result, we have deep expertise in repurposing underutilized and contaminated land, such as landfills, brownfields, and old coal mines, for solar development to maximize community-related benefits. Through BQ Energy, we are currently developing brownfield solar projects in Harrison County, as well as in Jefferson and Noble Counties and the city of Columbus.

If H.B. 197 passes, the CleanCapital and BQ Energy team look forward to turning even more of Ohio's polluted lands into brightfields.

Conclusion

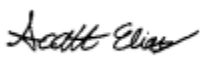
Over the next decade, the solar industry is expected to install 500 GW of new solar capacity, four times greater than the amount installed through 2022. That growth means energy jobs. It means construction jobs. It means private investment from the world's largest institutional investors. And that growth can happen in Ohio with the establishment of a Community Solar Pilot Program.

According to an analysis from the Ohio University Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service's Center for Economic Development and Community Resilience, the construction of community solar facilities in Ohio could contribute to nearly $3.49 billion in gross state product (GSP), 27,254 Ohio job years with total earnings of $2.48 billion, and $409.5 million in local tax revenue over its lifetime.

In conclusion, the passage of H.B. 197 and the creation of a Community Solar Pilot Program in Ohio will create jobs, leverage private investment, augment Ohio's economic growth, repurpose brownfields into brightfields, and further develop a diverse energy portfolio that contributes to a smarter, more flexible grid architecture that is better able to withstand shocks from extreme weather, targeted attacks, or other system failures.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am available to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



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