



**Proponent Testimony for HB 197**  
**Delivered to the House Public Utilities Committee**  
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**September 20, 2023**

Chair Stein, Vice Chair Blasdel, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Public Utilities Committee thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 197. My name is Jessica Collingsworth, and I am the Central Policy Director for Nexamp. Nexamp is a vertically integrated clean energy company with over 500 employees. Nexamp manages the complete project lifecycle of community solar projects from design and construction to customer acquisition and management, operations, and maintenance. Nexamp proudly offers community solar to residents and small businesses across the country, providing guaranteed energy savings, with no sign-up costs, no credit checks, and no long-term contracts.

HB 197 would allow for the creation of a community solar pilot program. The bill would enable my company, Nexamp, to expand our business to Ohio. For every 5 MW project we build we typically employ at least 50 people to construct the project, and dozens of other employees in roles such as: project management, customer loyalty representatives, sales associates, policy and legal support, and long-term operation and maintenance staff.

Community solar allows anyone in its service area — from homeowners or renters to small businesses, non-profits, or municipalities — to subscribe to a share of a solar project and receive bill credits that reduce their monthly electricity costs. Community solar projects produce benefits in several key areas including savings for the customers participating in the program, land lease payments to landowners, economic development for the county, and grid resiliency.

At the heart of community solar's purpose is to provide access to renewable energy and the associated cost savings for everyone, including renters, income-constrained individuals, or residents who own properties not suitable for residential solar. Community solar subscribers typically save between 10-20% on their monthly energy costs. This cost savings lowers the "energy burden" that many low-income households experience. Community Solar allows members of a community to subscribe to a single solar array. A solar array is installed at a site served by your local electric utility. Anyone with an electric account with that utility can subscribe to shares of that array. Community solar supports equitable access to renewable energy by allowing all households to benefit from solar energy, even if they are unable to install solar panels on their roof.

Community solar projects also generate tremendous value for landowners and nearby residents. While having a minimal impact on the natural state of the land, landowners can harvest energy from the sun, support their local communities with clean, locally produced power, and boost their financial security. By partnering with a community solar developer, such as Nexamp, landowners maintain ownership of their land while receiving 20-25 years of sustainable profit through land lease payments.



Nexamp has a landowner here today, named Martin. Martin is a member of the Amish community. Out of respect for his privacy, and beliefs, he did not want to be videotaped. So, I will attempt to tell his story. Martin lives in Portage County, OH. He is a landowner and businessowner in his community. He has partnered with Nexamp to host community solar on his property, where he has also built a home for his family of seven. He chose to enter into a land lease agreement with Nexamp to diversify his family income. The community solar project will take up less than half of his land (around 30 acres) so he can continue to farm the remaining acres. Martin is a plumber by trade, and the land lease payments will allow him to support his family and his community. His land is adjacent to a high school, and he aims to use the community solar project once constructed to educate students on solar. The high school could also be a subscriber to the solar project.

As I noted, community solar development brings economic benefits to the local community in the form of property taxes, local permitting fees, siting fees, local jobs, and more. This revenue is typically used to improve local public infrastructure or fund public projects, such as parks, schools, and more. A recent Ohio University study<sup>1</sup> found that the Ohio Community Solar Pilot Program created by HB197 could yield more than \$3.49 billion in gross state product, and \$400 million in local tax revenue.

Community solar enables U.S. energy independence while empowering local economies. Community solar can benefit the grid and utilities as well. Placing solar farms on the grid where there are few other power sources can help stabilize the grid. Community solar helps make the electric grid more resilient and better at avoiding prolonged power outages. That's because it helps spread out electricity generation. Spreading out electricity generation reduces the costs of energy transmission and helps keep the power grid stable.

Community solar is collaboration at its finest; communities, landowners, utilities, and developers all working together to bring renewable energy to all.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>1</sup> [New study finds Ohio community solar could yield more than \\$3.49 billion in gross state product, \\$400 million in local tax revenue | Coalition for Community Solar Access](#)