



**Proponent Testimony HB 197
House Public Utilities Committee
Catholic Conference of Ohio
April 24th, 2024**

Chair Stein, Vice Chair Robb Blasdel, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the House Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today. My name is Will Kuehnle, and I am an associate director with the Catholic Conference of Ohio. The Catholic Conference is the official voice of the Catholic Church in Ohio on matters of public policy, and we are pleased to support House Bill 197, to establish the community solar pilot and solar development program.

The Catholic Conference of Ohio thanks Representative Ray and Representative Hoops for introducing HB 197, and we support this legislation based on the Catholic Church's teaching regarding our obligations to care for our common home, to employ innovative means of stewarding our resources, and to attend to the needs of the vulnerable.

Caring for our common home requires public attention to the means of energy production, and HB 197 brings an innovative approach to an all-of-the-above energy strategy in the form of the solar pilot and solar development programs. These solar energy projects, initiated by private capital, will contribute to a sustainable and diversified portfolio of energy production. As Pope Francis has said, "taking advantage of abundant solar energy will require the establishment of mechanisms," through public policy such as those proposed by HB 197.

One of the fundamental principles of a Catholic social vision is solidarity. Solidarity means caring for one another and for the world, discharging the duty given to our first parents to tend to the earth. Solidarity calls us to ensure that every person has access to the means necessary to provide for health and frugal comfort, including sustainable and resilient sources of energy. Solidarity sees those living near brownfields or recently closed coal mines and other distressed sites identified by HB 197 and extends new opportunities and occasions for development, recognizing the right rooted in human dignity to grow and flourish.

HB 197 exemplifies this principle of solidarity. The Catholic Conference urges a swift passage of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am happy to answer your questions.