

Proponent Testimony by P. Kennard Wright on House Bill 197  
Faith Communities Go Green & Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio  
House Public Utilities Committee  
April 22, 2024

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 establish the community solar pilot program and the solar development program. My name is P. Kennard Wright and I am Facilities Leader of Faith Communities Go Green (FCGG) and a member of the Creation Care and Environmental Justice Commission (CCEJ) of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio.

FCGG is 10-county regional organization centered out of Cincinnati that helps member congregations of all faiths to reduce their environmental footprint and costs associated with building energy consumption. In that capacity I interview and conduct energy assessments for the buildings of our 60-plus members and help them develop energy reduction plans. In my role with CCEJ I have led the Episcopal Diocesan Energy Efficiency Improvement Grant Program the Diocese offered from 2021 to 2023, and oversaw the technical evaluation of grant applications from our 70-some member congregations.

While there are many benefits of HB 197 now under consideration, I will limit my remarks to the point of view of houses of worship and non-profits, who I deal with in my volunteer role for Faith Communities Go Green (FCGG) and with the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio. In my work with our member congregations, I find many of them desiring to use solar power generated electricity, either for cost or religious reasons. However, there are a large number of reasons why they can't under present conditions. These include: too many trees or buildings shading their property; roofs unsuitable for solar panels either structurally or because of slate or tile surfaces; and historic zoning regulations. Community solar is the perfect avenue for these congregations because it would allow them to buy solar-generated electricity from a location remote to them, and thus not be subject to the constraints I mentioned above. Furthermore, since such solar facilities are usually on a much larger scale than would be installed at any individual house of worship or non-profit, the cost per kilowatt-hour would be less, leading to a more favorable economic outcome for the subscriber congregations than if they installed their own system.

I hope you will move to open this important avenue for consumers, including houses of worship and non-profits, to access low-cost, clean electricity in Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on behalf of HB 197. I would be happy to answer your questions.

*P. Kennard Wright*