



Ohio Environmental Council [Action Fund]

March 19, 2025

Proponent Testimony - House Bill 15 Ohio House Energy Committee

Chair Holmes, Vice-Chair Klopfenstein, Ranking Member Glassburn, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as a Proponent on House Bill 15 (HB 15). My name is Nolan Rutschilling, and I serve as the Managing Director of Energy Policy for the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund (OEC AF). The OEC Action Fund's mission is to protect the environment and health of all Ohio communities while ensuring a fair and affordable energy system.

While HB 15 is a comprehensive, sweeping piece of legislation, our testimony focuses on key areas that we support as well as opportunities for further improvement to help ensure that Ohio moves toward a reliable, affordable, and community-centered energy future. In previous testimony we expressed our continued support for the legislation's immediate repeal of the OVEC Coal subsidies and the repeal of Electric Security Plans, as well as calling for energy efficiency and demand response programs to be included under rate cases.

Support for Community Energy Pilot

We support the inclusion of a Community Energy Pilot Program in HB 15 to help innovative local clean energy projects get off the ground. Community-led energy projects, including microgrids, shared solar, and resilience hubs, offer critical opportunities for local job creation, community resilience, and access to affordable clean energy, especially in underserved and rural communities.

Support for Advanced Transmission Technologies (ATTs) and Heat Maps

We strongly support the provisions in HB 15 that promote planning and study of Advanced Transmission Technologies (ATTs), dynamic line ratings, and storage solutions that can improve grid flexibility, capacity, and resilience. Additionally, we are encouraged by the bill's requirement for utilities to create and publicly share heat maps and hosting capacity maps. These tools are critical for increasing transparency and helping developers, communities, and policymakers identify where new energy projects can be effectively integrated into the grid.

By advancing ATTs and requiring heat maps, Ohio can optimize existing grid infrastructure, reduce costly new builds, and ensure we are prepared for future energy



demands, including electrification and renewable energy integration. We encourage the legislation to maintain these provisions and to consider adding a defined process for piloting and incorporating ATTs into long-term grid planning.

HB 15's heat map provisions provide significant clarity and uniformity across the state of Ohio, which will allow Ohio legislators, business stakeholders, and communities to have access to standardized data around our energy grid. Notably, all four electric distribution utilities have committed to some form of the heat mapping process already:

- AEP Ohio ([ESP V](#)) has agreed in their latest ESP to analyze and evaluate the implementation of a capacity “heat map” that would be externally available.
- Duke Energy Ohio ([ESP](#), Page 17) has agreed in their latest ESP to publish a publicly available distribution circuit hosting capacity map by December 31, 2026, updated on their website quarterly.
- AES Ohio ([Grid Modernization Plan](#), Page 16) has agreed to publish an online hosting capacity map tool by June 2027 in their Grid Mod case, showing capacity for new load and distributed energy resources, separately.
- First Energy ([Grid Modernization Plan](#), Page 7): commits to externally available heat map focusing on grid capacity and customer load, as well as capacity for distributed energy resources).

Recommendation to include Demand Response

We recommend that demand response programs also be added to the bill. Demand response allows customers to be compensated for reducing usage during peak times, which lowers system costs, avoids blackouts, and supports grid reliability. Demand response is a cost-effective solution available to industrial customers through “interruptibility” rates that would also benefit residential and small business customers, particularly as Ohio modernizes its grid.

Recommendation for Appropriate Timelines in Siting Process

While we support efforts to improve Ohio's generation and transmission buildout, we caution against shortening Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) timelines too drastically. Communities deserve the time and opportunity to review and weigh in on major energy projects that will affect them for decades to come.

We recommend lengthening the proposed siting review timelines, both for projects within and outside of Priority Investment Areas. Longer timelines will allow for environmental reviews, meaningful public input, and better outcomes for all



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stakeholders, without causing unnecessary delays. A balanced approach to siting reform will ensure that we build the grid of the future while protecting community interests and environmental resources.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions or provide additional information.

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