

**BEFORE
THE OHIO SITING BOARD**

**In the matter of the Application of Birch)
Solar 1, LLC for a Certificate of)
Environmental Compatibility and Public)
Need to Construct a Solar-Powered Electric)
Generation Facility in Allen and Auglaize)
Counties, Ohio.)**

Case No. 20-1605-EL-BGN

TESTIMONY OF

T. Rae Neal

on behalf of

Allen Auglaize Coalition for Reasonable Energy

May 11, 2022

1 **1. Please state your name.**

2 T. Rae Neal

3

4 **2. Please state your address.**

5 I live at 18240 Sellers Road, Lima, Ohio 45806.

6

7 **3. Please summarize your background and relationship to the Birch Solar project.**

8 I am a healthcare professional and a member of Ohio Clinicians for Climate Action (OCCA). I
9 helped found the Allen Auglaize Coalition for Reasonable Energy (the “Coalition”) to educate
10 myself and the community about solar energy, which led to advocating for the Birch Solar
11 project (the “Project”). The Coalition is a formal grassroots coalition of individuals and
12 landowners residing in Allen and Auglaize Counties that seeks to educate and engage with the
13 community to inform and dispel misconceptions about solar energy and the Project.

14

15 **4. Please summarize your position on whether the Birch Solar project should be**
16 **approved.**

17 Ohio’s reliance on fossil fuels has contributed to air pollution. EPA data show that over three
18 million metric tons of greenhouse gases were emitted in Allen County in 2020 alone. Burning
19 fossil fuels also greatly increases air pollution as demonstrated by the fact that since 1990, Allen
20 County has often been classified by the USEPA as one of the top emitters of toxic air pollution
21 among all Ohio’s counties, at times topping the list. Emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxides,
22 particulates and other pollutants associated with burning of fossil fuels causes children to suffer

23 from asthma in record numbers, and the issue is not localized to Allen and Auglaize Counties.
24 The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America’s 2019 report on the Top 100 Asthma Capitals
25 ranked Akron, Cleveland, Dayton, Toledo, Columbus, and Cincinnati among the most challenged
26 places to live for people with asthma as mentioned in the Ohio Clinicians for Climate Action
27 letter to Governor Mike DeWine. The letter states that Ohio ranks “sixth in carbon dioxide
28 emissions in the US” and associated air pollution contributes to, and exacerbates, asthma in
29 “[o]ver 250,000 of Ohio’s children.” Exhibit A, at 1. The Ohio Clinicians for Climate Action
30 call for action to advance “clean, renewable energy”, “improving air quality and ensuring a
31 healthy environment for [Ohio’s] citizens.” *Id.*

32
33 The OPSB should approve the project based on these local and state health benefits.

34

35 **5. Does this conclude your testimony?**

36 Yes.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

In accordance with OAR 4906-2-02(D)(6), this document has been filed electronically and OPSB's e-filing system will electronically serve notice of the filing of this document on the parties referenced in the service list of the docket who have electronically subscribed to this case. Such notice constitutes service of this document.

/s/John Heer

John A. Heer, Esq.

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Administrative Law Judges:

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EXHIBIT A

April 13, 2021

The Honorable Mike DeWine, Governor
The State of Ohio
Riffe Center, 30th Floor,
77 South High Street,
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor DeWine:

We, Ohio medical professionals, have responsibilities to care for our patients' immediate health concerns. We know that the welfare of our patients depends on having access not only to excellent healthcare, but also to healthy food, water, and air. For this to happen, our elected officials need to accelerate our state's transition to a renewable energy economy.

Ohio is among the top ten energy consumers in the United States. Currently, the majority of our power supply comes from over 20 coal and natural gas power plants. Due to these power plants, high emission industries, and our transportation infrastructure, Ohio ranks sixth in carbon dioxide emissions in the US. Air pollution-related to fossil fuel combustion, including sulfur dioxide, surface ozone, and fine particulate matter, causes a host of health harms to Ohioans, especially to our children.

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America's 2019 report on the Top 100 Asthma Capitals ranked Akron, Cleveland, Dayton, Toledo, Columbus, and Cincinnati among the most challenging places to live for people with asthma. Over 250,000 of Ohio's children have asthma, and African-American and Hispanic children are disproportionately impacted. Air pollution both causes and exacerbates asthma, and also contributes to poor birth outcomes such as premature birth and low birth weight, both of which are risk factors for infant mortality, a public health crisis in our state. Moreover, a study conducted by Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center found that children exposed to traffic-related air pollution showed reductions in brain size and cerebrospinal fluid (the fluid cushioning the brain), leading to various developmental and physical delays. Even prenatal exposure to air pollution affects kids' learning, cognition, attention, and sleep. These are a few of many examples. The list of studies highlighting harmful health effects of our current energy sector is growing each day.

Even though the health harms of fossil fuel burning have been documented extensively, too little has been done at the state level to advance clean, renewable energy, and sustainable, equitable transportation. One of the most recent examples is the passing of House Bill 6, which rolled back renewable energy standards and energy efficiency programs, while subsidizing two coal-fired power plants. Fortunately, many Ohio cities—like Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, and others—have stepped up to help fill the void of state leadership, and have used aggregation to commit to 100 percent renewable energy. These communities are serving as an example of what can be done to commit to improving air quality and ensuring a healthy environment for our citizens, and it is time for the state of Ohio to follow their lead.

The good news is, when compared with the rest of the country, Ohio is at the top of the list in potential health and economic benefits we realize from clean energy investment. We urge our elected state leaders to accelerate bold, decisive, equitable actions toward a clean energy economy to protect the health of all Ohioans.

As health professionals living and working in Ohio, we ask the state legislature and governor to immediately reinstate Ohio’s renewable energy standards and energy efficiency programs, to invest in public transportation and improve electric vehicle infrastructure, and to set concrete goals to transition fossil fuel-based power plants to renewable energy by 2050. The health of Ohio’s families—especially our children—depends on it.

Sincerely,



The Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics



Ohio
CHAPTER

The Ohio Chapter of The American College of Cardiology



The Ohio Thoracic Society



The Ohio Public Health Association



Sustainability in Medicine at the Ohio State University College of Medicine: An affiliate of Medical Students for a Sustainable Future



Ohio Clinicians for Climate Action



The Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine Chapter of Physicians Action Network

Dr. Francois Abi Fadel

Hajera Afreen, Medical Student

Dr. Raouf Amin

Dr. Dennis Auckley

Elizabeth Auckley, Medical Student

Ross Bales, Medical Student

Dr. Judith A. Bartley

Ariunaa Bayanjargal, Medical Student

Annamarie Beckmeyer, Medical Student

Dr. Peggy Berry

Dr. Joseph Blanda

Brian Hansen, Medical Student

Dr. Jennifer Hardie

Dr. William Hardie

Alexander Hare, Medical Student

Dr. Kari Harper

Dr. David Harris

Dr. Don Hayes

Jack Hedberg, Medical Student

Dr. Lawrence Hill

Joshua Hollman, Medical Student

John Hosmer-Quint, Medical Student

Dr. Diana Pi

Arden Piepho, Medical Student

Megan Pino, Medical Student

Corbin Pontious, Medical Student

Michelle Rebuffatti, Medical Student

Dr. Catherine Romanos

Dr. Marc Rothenberg

Dr. Richard Ruddy

Kamberlyn Runzo, MSW, LIW-S

Dr. Patrick Ryan

James Schwaderer, BSN, RN

Christian Blough, Medical Student	Dr. Marium Husain	Dr. Sara Scott
Dr. Thomas Boat	Dr. Steve Jewell	Dr. Ash Sehgal
Dr. Aparna Bole	Dr. Alan Jobe	Napiera Shareef, Medical Student
Jenna Braun, Medical Student	Avani Kabra, Medical Student	Shuchi Sharma, Medical Student
Carolina Brea, Medical Student	Juhi Katta, Medical Student	Saba Shevidi, Medical Student
Dr. John Brewington	Dr. Kathi Kemper	Jasneet Singh, Medical Student
Dr. Gregory Burg	Dr. Carolyn Kercksmar	Mitchell Singstock, Medical Student
Sarah Burns, Medical Student	Sat Kartar Khalsa, Medical Student	Dr. Daniel Skinner
David Bushart, Medical Student	Dr. Sumita Khatri	Mike Smeltzer, MPH
Woo Yul Byun, Medical Student	Dr. Steve Kirkby	Paige Spieth, Medical Student
Troy Cao, Medical Student	Dr. Haley Klimaszewski	Zoe Springstubb, PA-C
Lucinda Cave, MSN, RN	Dr. Elizabeth Kramer	Hendrik Stegall, Medical Student
Jennifer Cenker, Medical Student	Alexander Ladron De Guevara, Medical Student	Dr. Arnold Strauss
Coreena Chan, Medical Student	Dr. Amy Lee	Lori Sullivan, MSW, LSW
Monica Chapman, RN	Dr. Michelle Lierl	Kimberly Sycks, Medical Student
Mehak Chawla, Medical Student	Dr. Janell Lundgren	Zheng hong Tan, Medical Student
Corinne Conaway, Medical Student	Dr. Satish Madala	Lauren Taylor, Medical Student
Kylene Daily, Medical Student	Jodie Makara, Medical Student	Jennifer Tomlinson, MS, BSN, RN
Joshua Debo, Medical Student	Dru Martinez, Medical Student	Dr. Cherie Torres-Silva
Zoey Del Pinto, Medical Student	Dr. Gary McPhail	Dr. Christopher Towe
Dr. Katherine Dobbs	Austin Miller, Medical Student	Jasmine Tuazon, Medical Student
Lisa Dorn, Medical Student	Joseph Miller, Medical Student	Lucy U, Medical Student
Francisca Douglass, Medical Student	Daniel Naughton, Medical Student	Arti Vaishnav, Medical Student
Benny Eckerle, Medical Student	Tawnya Rae Neal, APRN	Albert Vargas, Medical Student
Victoria El-Hayek, Medical Student	Megan Neumann, Medical Student	Divya Vinod, Medical Student
Alan Esparza Gutierrez, Medical Student	Charissa Newkirk, Medical Student	Dr. Laura Walkup
Catherine Fabian, Medical Student	Dr. Nicholas Newman	Sarah Watson, RN
Jessica Fulton, Medical Student	Gracyn Noffert, Medical Student	Stephanie Wentzel, Medical Student
Nicholas Gajkowski, Medical Student	Dr. Kelly Omalia	Audrey White, Medical Student
Dr. Victor Garcia	Carolina Ortiz Villabona, Medical Student	Dr. Jeffrey Whitsett
Erin Gill, Medical Student	Austin Oslock, Medical Student	Adam Wise, Medical Student
Dr. Mike Gittelman	Mackenzie Owen, Medical Student	Dr. Anne Wise
Sal Gomez, Medical Student	Sarah Pajka, Medical Student	Dr. Robert Wood
Evelyn Goodyear, Medical Student	Dr. Nathan Pajor	Dr. Jason Woods
Dr. Theresa Guilbert	Hannah Palme, Medical Student	Dr. Theodore Wymyslo
Dr. Neepa Gurbani	Dr. John Pascoe	Dr. Assem Ziady

Contact: Anna Cifranic, Ohio Clinicians for Climate Action, OCCA@theOEC.org

CC: ALL MEMBERS OF THE OHIO GENERAL ASSEMBLY